

Two terrorists killed  
F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Security forces conducted an IBO in general area Kolpur, Kachhi district of Balochistan, on reported presence of terrorists belonging to the Indian proxy, Fitna al Hindustan. According to ISPR, during the conduct of operation, own forces effectively engaged the Fitna al Hindustan terrorists' location, and after an intense fire exchange, two Indian sponsored terrorists were killed.



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Ex-minister Abbas dies  
F.P. Report

KOHAT: Former Federal Minister Abbas Afridi passed away on Friday after succumbing to critical burn injuries sustained in a gas explosion at his residence in the Azam area of Kohat district. According to police and family sources, Afridi was severely injured in the blast, which occurred on Thursday, and was receiving treatment at a hospital where he later died.

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# PM, Saudi Crown Prince vows to deepen bilateral ties

MAKKAH (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Friday met with His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, the Crown Prince and the Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia, in Makkah al-Mukarramah and discussed matters of mutual interest.

The meeting reaffirmed the deep-rooted, strategic and fraternal ties between Pakistan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Prime Minister was accompanied by a high-level delegation comprising Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, Minister for Interior Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi and Minister for Information Attaullah Tarar.

On behalf of the government and people of Pakistan, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif extended warm Eid greetings to His Majesty King Salman bin Abdulaziz and His Royal Highness Mohammed bin Salman the Crown Prince and commended the Kingdom's hospitality and service to the pilgrims from around the world who are in Saudi Arabia to perform Hajj. He expressed gratitude for the remarkable efforts of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and the Crown Prince in ensuring a safe and spiritually fulfilling pilgrimage experience.

The Prime Minister expressed appreciation for the Kingdom's proactive role during recent tensions between Pakistan and India, and its steadfast commitment to promoting peace and stability in the region and beyond. He underscored Pakistan's policy of responsible restraint in the face of Indian aggression, emphasizing that sustainable peace in South Asia is achievable only through dialogue.

The two leaders also held detailed discussions on the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza. They stressed the imperative for the international community to fulfill its moral and legal obligations and reiterated their unwavering support for a just and durable

## Shehbaz departs for Pakistan

JEDDAH (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Friday departed for Pakistan after completing his two day visit to Saudi Arabia. Governor Jeddah Prince Saud bin Abdullah Jalawi, Saudi Arabia's ambassador to Pakistan Nawaf bin Saeed Al- Malkiy, Pakistan's ambassador to Saudi Arabia Ahmed Farooq and high level diplomatic officials saw off the prime minister at the Jeddah airport.

## Premier performs Umrah

MAKKAH-AL-MUKARRAMAH (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, accompanied by Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir and a high-level delegation on Thursday night performed Umrah during their official visit to Saudi Arabia. The visit is being undertaken on the special invitation of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. The door of the Holy Kaaba was specially opened for the delegation. They also offered Nawafil and expressed gratitude to Allah Almighty on the victory of "Bunyan-um- Marsoos". They offered prayers of thanks for Pakistan's recent achievements in economic and public welfare domains, and also made special supplications for the progress and prosperity of the country. Prayers were also offered for the oppressed Muslim sisters and brothers of Kashmir and Palestine. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi, and Information Minister Attaullah Tarar also accompanied the Prime Minister during the visit.

resolution to the Palestinian question, grounded in the Arab Peace Initiative and the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed satisfaction on the growing momentum of bilateral cooperation in the political, economic and security domains. Both leaders agreed to further elevate this strategic partnership in accordance with the shared vision of the leadership and the aspirations of the brotherly people of the two countries.

Both leaders reaffirmed their mutual commitment to deepening the multifaceted relationship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif extended a cordial invitation to His Royal Highness the Crown Prince to undertake an official visit to Pakistan at his earliest convenience, which the Crown Prince graciously accepted.

The Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also attended the special

luncheon hosted by Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud as a guest of honour at Royal Diwan.

The Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia specially received the Prime Minister and himself drove the vehicle to take the Prime Minister to the luncheon. During the luncheon, the Saudi Crown Prince warmly greeted the Prime Minister and the two leaders held inform talks.

The important leaders of Middle East, members of the Saudi cabinet and high level Saudi civil and military leadership attended the luncheon. The grand reception of Saudi Crown Prince for the Prime Minister and his participation in the luncheon as a guest of honour were reflective of the close brotherly relationship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia and of Pakistan's diplomatic successes under the leadership of the Prime Minister.

# Pak-India conflicts: Bilawal urges Trump to play role

WASHINGTON (AFP): Head of high-level Pakistani Parliamentary delegation and Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has urged US President Donald Trump to play a proactive role in bringing India to the negotiating table for comprehensive talks with Pakistan.

In an interview with AFP, Bilawal said Pakistan is willing to discuss terrorism, but emphasised that Kashmir issue must be central to any dialogue between the two countries. He warned that India is setting a dangerous precedent in South Asia by justifying war in response to terrorist incidents.

He said the fate of the 1.7 billion people and two great nations cannot be left to faceless, non-state actors, nor dictated by India's new normal. Earlier, the Pakistani delegation met a group of American lawmakers on Thursday, telling them that India is consistently resisting dialogue to resolve bilateral issues.

Meanwhile, the US lawmakers in Washington have assured their unwavering support for peace in South Asia as tensions escalate over India's potential suspension of the Indus Water Treaty.

A high-level Pakistani Parliamentary delegation, led by Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, met with a bipartisan group of U.S. legislators at a dinner reception hosted by Pakistan's Ambassador to the U.S., Rizwan Saeed Sheikh, at Pakistan House in Washington D.C. During the engagement, Bilawal

emphasized the critical need for regional peace and stability, labeling the delegation's visit as a "mission of peace." He alerted US lawmakers to the severe consequences of India's unilateral actions regarding the Indus Water Treaty, describing it as an existential threat akin to a declaration of war.

Commending Washington's pivotal role in achieving a ceasefire between India and Pakistan, Bhutto Zardari urged US legislators to persist in their efforts to foster peace in South Asia. He highlighted the crucial position of the United States in persuading India to address the issue of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. The US Congress members expressed their full backing for regional peace and commended the Pakistani delegation for their comprehensive briefing on the current crisis. In a separate meeting, the Pakistani delegation held fruitful discussions with Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Allison Hooker.

The delegation lauded the contributions of President Donald Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio in facilitating the Pakistan-India ceasefire, hoping it would pave the way for enduring peace through dialogue. They also voiced concerns over India's unprovoked aggression and the illegal suspension of the Indus Water Treaty, underscoring the urgency of addressing these issues for long-term stability in South Asia.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif set up the delegation last month, tasking it to present Pakistan's point of view



regarding the country's conflict with India last month. India and Pakistan last month engaged in four days of fighting, striking each other with missiles, drones, artillery and fighter jets before Washington brokered a ceasefire on May 10. Bhutto Zardari's delegation has held a series of meetings with top international diplomats since arriving in New York on Monday, urging the global community to help India and Pakistan enter a comprehensive dialogue to peacefully resolve their differences.

On Thursday the delegation met members of the US Congressional Pakistan Caucus in Washington. These included Republican party leaders Jack Bergman and Ryan Zinke and Democratic leaders Tom Suozzi and Ilhan Omar, among others. "Pakistan remains committed to peace, but sadly, India consistently resists dialogue," Bhutto Zardari was quoted as saying by Bilawal House, his official residence.



MAKKAH: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif meeting with Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia.

## Pakistan rejects Modi's remarks F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has strongly rejected Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks on the situation in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), calling them baseless and misleading.

In a statement on Friday, FO spokesperson Shafqat Ali said that such statements represented a deliberate attempt to deflect international attention from the grave and persistent human rights violations being committed in a territory under foreign occupation.

"Pakistan is deeply dismayed that the Indian premier has once again chosen to accuse it of involvement in the Pahalgalam attack, without presenting a single piece of credible evidence," Khan said. The spokesperson said IIOJK remains an internationally recognised disputed territory, the final status of which was to be determined per the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and the will of the Kashmiri people.

"No amount of rhetoric can change this legal and historical reality," he added. The spokesperson said: "Claims of development in IIOJK ring hollow against the backdrop of an unprecedented military presence, suppression of fundamental freedoms, arbitrary arrests, and a concerted effort to alter the region's demography in violation of international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention."

He said Pakistan remains steadfast in its principled support for the people of IIOJK in their just struggle for their rights and dignity. "We call upon the international community, including the UN and human rights organisations, to hold India accountable for its oppression and to ensure that the Kashmiri people are allowed to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination, as enshrined in the relevant UN Security Council resolutions," he added.

## Holiday Notice

ON the occasion of Eidul Azha, the offices of *The Frontier Post* will remain closed on 7th and 8th (Saturday, Sunday). Therefore, there will be no issue on 8th and 9th (Sunday and Monday).

*The Frontier Post wishes a happy Eidul Azha to their valued readers.*

# Trump: Pakistan has 'very strong' leadership



WASHINGTON: United States President Donald Trump has said Pakistan has a very strong leadership. US President Donald Trump again said he felt proud of brokering a ceasefire between Pakistan and India. US President Donald Trump, while meeting with the German Chancellor at the White House, said that he told both countries that if bullets are fired, there will be no trade, adding Pakistan has very strong leadership.

Donald Trump said what is happening in Russia and Ukraine is tragic. "I don't think Russia will sign a peace agreement with Ukraine, the Biden administration let in some terrible people," The US President further said, "We are expelling these people one by one, we do not want more bad people to come into our country."

A major military standoff between Pakistan and India, involving cross-border strikes from both sides, erupted just weeks after the Pahalgalam incident in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), where 26 tourists lost their lives. India hastily accused Pakistan of involvement, a claim Islamabad strongly denied.

In the wake of the incident, Indian forces launched unprovoked attacks targeting civilian areas in Pakistan over a span of three days. In response, the Pakistan Armed Forces initiated Operation Bunyan-um-Marsoos, a defensive operation aimed at repelling aggression and restoring stability.

During the course of the

operation, Pakistan successfully shot down six Indian Air Force (IAF) fighter jets — including three Rafale aircraft — and neutralized multiple drones. The confrontation, involving the two nuclear-capable nations, lasted nearly 87 hours before a ceasefire agreement was reached on May 10 through diplomatic mediation led by the United States.

Last month, US President Donald Trump once again claimed the credit for brokering ceasefire between Pakistan and India, asserting that he used trade as a negotiation tactic. Trump on Friday repeated his claim that he stopped Pakistan and India from fighting and told the two nations that his administration cannot trade with people that are shooting at each other.

"We stopped Pakistan and India from fighting. I believe that could have turned out into a nuclear disaster," Trump said during a press conference in the Oval Office with billionaire Tesla CEO Elon Musk, who is leaving the Trump administration after helming the Department of Government Efficiency. Trump added that he wants to thank the leaders of Pakistan, the leaders of India, and I want to thank my people also. We talked

trade and we said we can't trade with people that are shooting at each other and potentially using nuclear weapons'.

Trump said that leaders in Pakistan and India are great leaders and they understood, and they agreed, and that all stopped. "We are stopping others from fighting also, because ultimately, we can fight better than anybody. We have the greatest military in the world. We have the greatest leaders in the world," Trump said.

On May 13, Trump said that maybe India and Pakistan can have a "nice dinner together" while stating that his administration brokered the "historic ceasefire" between the two countries through trade. "They are actually getting along. Maybe we can even get them together where they go out and have a nice dinner together. Wouldn't that be nice?", Trump said at the Saudi Arabia-US Investment Forum 2025 in his visit to the West-Asian nation.

"We've come a long way. Millions of people could have died from that conflict that started off small and was getting bigger and bigger by the day," Trump added. Trump also took credit for brokering the India-Pakistan conflict through the means of trade, praising the Prime Ministers of both countries. "Just days ago, my administration successfully brokered a historic ceasefire to stop the escalating violence between India and Pakistan, and I used trade to a large extent to do (that)," Trump said. — Agencies

# President congratulates nation, Muslim on Eid

## F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has extended his heartfelt congratulations to the entire Pakistani nation and the Muslim Ummah around the world on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha, emphasizing the importance of promoting values of sacrifice, love, brotherhood, and unity in our behavior.

"This day revives in us the spirit of faith, sacrifice, self-

lessness, and brotherhood. I pray that Allah Almighty makes this day a source of blessings, unity, and prosperity for our country and the entire Muslim Ummah. Ameen," the president said in a message. He said Eid-ul-Azha commemorates the unparalleled obedience, sacrifice, and submission of Prophet Ibrahim (AS) and Prophet Ismail (AS).

"These great personalities set a shining example of

devotion, loyalty, selflessness, and sacrifice by wholeheartedly submitting to the command of Allah Almighty. This day reminds us that no sacrifice is too great in seeking the pleasure of Allah, and that our individual and collective success lies in obedience to His will," he added. He also called for drawing lessons from the spirit of sacrifice and selflessness shown by Prophet Ibrahim (AS) and integrate them into our lives.

# Majority of 1.6m pilgrims begin Tawaf Al-Ifadah as Eidul Azha starts

MINA: Most of this year's more than 1.6 million pilgrims had begun performing Tawaf Al-Ifadah by Friday in Makkah — the ritual that marks the final days of Hajj and the beginning of Eidul Azha celebrations for Muslims around the world.

Eid day began with masses of pilgrims performing the symbolic stoning of the devil in Mina under moderate temperatures nearing 30 C, with the National Center for Meteorology forecasting a high of up to 40 C. The stoning ritual is among the final rites of Hajj, which is one of the five pillars of Islam. The Tawaf Al-Ifadah — derived from the Arabic word meaning "to pour forth" — refers to the ritual circumambulation of the Kaaba performed by pilgrims after returning from Mina.

It is one of the essential and obligatory rites of Hajj. It involves walking around the Kaaba seven times within

the Grand Mosque in Makkah, following the pilgrims' return from Mina where they perform the symbolic stoning of the devil. The ritual reflects spiritual submission, physical devotion, and the culmination of the core rites of the Hajj pilgrimage.

Ali bin Faraj Al-Marri, a Qatari pilgrim, told Arab News that the tawaf was smooth and well-organized, saying: "This is my first time performing Hajj, and I had heard that the Grand Mosque used to be extremely crowded. This has been one of the most successful Hajj seasons." Saeed Al-Nabit, the head of Al-Marri's Hajj campaign group, echoed the sentiment, saying everything went as planned, and adding: "This year has been one of the best Hajj seasons ever."

Leaving the Jamarat Bridge after performing the stoning ritual, Yasmeen Ahmed, a Libyan pilgrim, said with tears in her eyes that she was

on the verge of completing one of the pillars of Islam — a lifelong dream she had always prayed to Allah to fulfill. She said: "This is a moment I will never forget. I never imagined I would live to experience it, but I have always prayed for it. I thank Allah for making it possible, and I would also like to express my gratitude to Saudi Arabia for the beautiful organization of Hajj. There must have been tremendous efforts behind such a successful arrangement."

The Jamarat Al-Aqaba site, the largest and most prominent of the three stoning structures within the Jamarat facility, stands as one of Saudi Arabia's most prominent development projects at the holy sites, marking a transformative leap in crowd management aligned with the highest international engineering and organizational standards. With the capacity to accommodate over 300,000 pilgrims per

hour, the facility ensures a smooth and safe flow of pilgrims during the peak days of stoning rituals in Mina.

Every year on this day, the Jamarat area in Mina witnesses the arrival of throngs of pilgrims performing this critical Hajj rite — a solemn act of worship that embodies obedience and adherence to the teachings of Prophet Muhammad. The stoning ritual is among the most spiritually significant and logistically complex components of the Hajj pilgrimage.

The Jamarat area in the past consisted of small stone pillars surrounded by narrow spaces and limited roads, leading to severe congestion and difficulties, particularly with the growing number of pilgrims, the Saudi Press Agency said in a report. According to the Royal Commission for Makkah City and Holy Sites, a bridge was constructed over the three Jamarat pillars in 1975 to create a second level for the

stoning ritual.

Over the years the structure underwent multiple phases of expansion and enhancement. The current Jamarat Bridge was inaugurated in its first phase in 2006, with full completion achieved in 2010. The bridge comprises five levels, each 12 meters high, extending 950 meters in length and 80 meters in width. It includes 11 entrances, 12 exits, and can accommodate up to 300,000 pilgrims per hour. The facility also features a range of support services, including emergency helicopter landing pads, 3,289 escalators, advanced surveillance systems, and four tunnels for vehicles and buses.

The facility operates under a sophisticated management system involving specialized field teams working round the clock to ensure safety and provide medical and guidance services, in cooperation with var-

ious security and service agencies. The site is also equipped with multilingual guidance screens and modern surveillance cameras to enhance flow and ensure pilgrim safety.

As part of broader efforts to enhance the pilgrim experience, Kidana Development Company, the executive arm of the Royal Commission for Makkah City and Holy Sites, has implemented several key projects this year. Notable among them is the installation of 200 mist fans in the facility's eastern square to reduce heat stress from direct sunlight. In addition, the Towards Mina initiative has been implemented to improve spatial orientation, helping to reduce the number of lost pilgrims and facilitating easier access to camps. The initiative relies on a color-coded signage system aligned with camp divisions and facility levels. — Arab News







# KP sees 40% surge in tax revenue over 11 months, says Muzzammil Aslam



**F.P. Report** PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on finance Muzzammil Aslam, has made a major statement regarding Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's tax revenues, saying that the upcoming provincial budget will be tax-free and there is no plan to impose any new taxes in the province.

year, while non-tax revenue has also seen a rise of over 50%. He added that the concerns of taxpayers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are being addressed. For the upcoming fiscal year, the same tax revenue target has been set without any increase in tax, and no new tax has been introduced. The focus will be on expanding the tax net and improving enforcement. Muzzammil Aslam further said that in the past 11 months, tax revenues in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have increased by Rs. 13.12 billion, reflecting a 40% rise. Sales tax on services increased by 28%, while the Infrastructure Development Cess saw a 105% increase.



PESHAWAR: A blacksmith sharpening the knives on the eve of Eid ul Azha.

## Cattle markets flooded with buyers on eve of Eidul Azha

PESHAWAR (APP): Despite soaring prices, thousands of people thronged cattle markets across Peshawar on the eve of Eidul Azha, driven by religious fervor and the annual obligation to perform Qurbani (sacrifice) in line with Sunnah of Hazrat Ibrahim (AS). As the festival draws nearer, makeshift cattle markets have sprung up across the city, attracting sacrificial animals transported from far-flung areas such as Bhakkar, Jhang, Multan, Mianwali, and Sargodha. The rush of buyers underscored the deep religious commitment among the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, for whom price is rarely a deterrent when fulfilling this Islamic ritual. Markets resounded with the calls of oxens and goats, and were bustling with buyers— young and old—moving through the dusty enclosures, evaluating the last of the arriving herds. For a few days, Peshawar takes on the look and feel of a rural town, as the smells of cow dung and hookah smoke fill the air, and animal handlers cook meals outside tents pitched beside their temporary stalls. For livestock sellers, Eidul Azha offers a significant opportunity to

earn a profit after months of raising animals. “Buyers are here, but they complain about the prices,” said Mosa Khan, a seller from Nowshera. At his stall, goats were being sold for around Rs75,000 on average. “There’s been a sharp increase in prices this year,” he explained, attributing it to the rising costs of fodder, transportation, and other inputs. In the bustling Ring Road cattle market, healthy oxens were priced between Rs350,000 and Rs500,000, depending on size and breed. Oxens were mainly sought by buyers looking for collective sacrifice options. People from neighboring districts, including Nowshera, Charsadda, and Khyber, also traveled to Peshawar in search of animals. However, for many, bargaining remained a challenge amid the high prices. “It’s difficult to buy even a goat individually,” said Mohammad Riaz, as he haggled for a bull at the Ring Road market. Mosa Khan echoed the sentiment, citing key factors behind the rising costs: “Shortage of fodder, high transport fares, and taxes are the main reasons.” According to the Pakistan Tanners Association, more than 6.1 million

animals—worth approximately Rs531 billion—were sacrificed across the country during Eidul Azha last year, including 3 million goats, 2.6 million cows, and 87,000 camels. Zahid Shinwari, former president of the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI), pointed to cross-border smuggling—particularly to Afghanistan—as a major contributor to the price hike. He proposed a tripartite export agreement between Pakistan, India, and Afghanistan to help regulate regional trade and meet domestic demand. To ensure smooth operations, the Livestock Department has taken several steps. Director Livestock Aftab Ahmed stated that special checkpoints had been set up to curb animal smuggling, while safety sprays were being conducted in major markets to prevent the spread of disease. As the eve of religious festival, buyers continue to brave the summer heat, dusty enclosures, and chaotic conditions in search of affordable options. Their recurring demand remains the same such as better facilities, stronger price control, and improved oversight for future Eidul Azha seasons.

## Kundi stresses peace, brotherhood, commitment

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Friday extended heartfelt greetings to the Muslim Ummah, particularly to the people of the province and the merged districts, on the blessed occasion of Eid ul-Adha 1446 Hijri. Highlighting the spiritual, social, and moral significance of this sacred day, the Governor said that Eid ul-Adha is a day of renewal of the spirit of sacrifice, sincerity, compassion, and humanity. It reminds us of the unparalleled obedience and sacrifice of Prophet Hazrat Ibrahim (AS) and his son Prophet Hazrat Ismail (AS). The Governor urged the public to include the poor, underprivileged, and deserving people in the celebrations so that the joy of Eid can be shared equally by all. “The days of Eid convey a message of mutual brotherhood, empathy, and

unity,” he added. Governor Kundi emphasized that Islam is a religion of peace, tolerance, and fraternity. He said, “As Muslims, we must pledge on this sacred occasion not only to serve ourselves but to make serving humanity our mission.” He called upon the nation to remain united for the stability, progress, and prosperity of Pakistan and to face every challenge with solidarity. He stressed that the blessings of this great day should inspire us to maintain unity at all levels for the security, sovereignty, and development of our beloved country, and to make every possible sacrifice for its wellbeing. Concluding his message, Governor Faisal Karim Kundi prayed, “May Allah accept our sacrifices, grant peace, development, and prosperity to our country and nation, and bless us with the strength to sincerely follow His teachings.”

## KP leaders prepare for peaceful protest on Imran’s orders

**F.P. Report** PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Communication and Works, Muhammad Sohail Afridi has said a strong nationwide protest will be launched on the directions of PTI Patron-in-Chief Imran Khan. He made it clear that no form of obstruction or oppression will be tolerated this time. He made these remarks while speaking to the media after the Al-Qadir Trust case hearing. Provincial ministers Meena Khan Afridi, Adnan Qadri, and other parliamentarians were also present on the occasion.

Sohail Afridi reiterated that a peaceful protest will be held and Punjab government will not be given any excuse to use force or firearms this time. Mr. Afridi added that Punjab government displayed an unprecedented level of brutality against the protesters in November last year which remains a dark chapter in our nation’s history. He added that this time, any oppressive measures will be met with steadfast resistance and that the protesters would not retreat unless Imran Khan himself calls off the protest. Sohail Afridi remarked that struggle for basic rights and rule of law will continue across the country.

## KP people to celebrate Eidul Azha with religious enthusiasm

PESHAWAR (APP): Eid-ul-Azha will be celebrated by people in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) including merged tribal areas on Saturday with religious fervour and enthusiasm. The day will dawn with special prayers in mosques and Eidgahs for the well-being of the Muslim Ummah and the progress, prosperity and security of the country. Eid congregations will be held in all major cities and towns of KP where people will seek forgiveness and mercy. Like other cities of the country, small and large Eid prayer gatherings will also be held in Peshawar. The main Eid congregation will be held at the Eidgah on Charsadda Road where ulema and religious scholars will highlight philosophy of sacrifice in way of Allah Almighty. The congregations will also be held at other major masjids such as Mahabat Khan, Qasim Ali Khan, Gunj Ali Khan, Delawer Khan, Dawash Masjid, Qasim Ali Khan, Sunehri Masjid, Kalabari Masjid, Spin Jumaat

Masjid Town, Zagana Masjid Hayatabad where special prayers would be offered for the country and the nation prosperity. The Ulema in their sermons will highlight the significance and philosophy of Eidul Azha and will offer a special Dua for the eternal peace of the people who have martyred in the line of duty by protecting the motherland. Maulana Tayab Qureshi, Chief Khateeb KP said Eid-ul-Azha is a great day of eternal sacrifice for the religion of islam and pleasing Allah. He said people must remember the poor and deserving people in their happiness on this holy Eid. The spirit of sacrifice teaches one to be ready for any service required for the good of humanity and willingness of Allah Almighty. He said the people have to devote lives to the service of Islam and humanity. Maulana Tayab said people should take special care of cleanliness after paying Sunnat Ibrahim and cooperate fully with the sanitation staff.



PESHAWAR: Goats having a fight in the animal market near Bacha Khan Chowk. — INP photo

## The Hindu-Muslim civilizational divide

# Jinnah’s vision, Iqbal’s dream, and today’s narrative

**Asif Ali Yousafzai** THE creation of Pakistan was not a knee-jerk political reaction - it was the outcome of a profound civilizational, religious, and socio-political divergence, formally articulated through the Two-Nation Theory. When present-day leaders like Pakistan's Field Marshal Gen. Asim Munir echo these ideological realities, they are often labeled as "communal" or "extremist." In truth, they are simply reaffirming what Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah declared back in 1940 - that Muslims and Hindus are two distinct nations. This article explores the historical context, political transformation, and modern relevance of that ideological divide. Gen. Asim Munir's Statement and the Indian Reaction In March 2025, Gen. Asim Munir (then COAS, now Field Marshal) stated during a civil-military forum in Islamabad: "Hindus and Muslims could never have coexisted as one nation - our ways of life, faiths, values, and civilizations are distinct. That is why Partition was inevitable." (Source: ISPR Brief, 15 April 2025) Indian media responded with fierce criticism, calling the statement "divisive." Yet this statement mirrors Jinnah's declaration during the Lahore Resolution: "Hindus and Muslims are two distinct nations. They have different religions, customs, literatures, heroes, histories, and conceptions of morality and justice." (Source: Lahore Session, 1940) Jinnah's Journey: From Unity to Realism Once a staunch proponent of Hindu-Muslim unity and a Congress member, Jinnah's disillusionment grew: 1937 elections revealed Congress's majoritarian mindset. The Urdu-Hindi debate exposed deep cultural fissures. Congress's so-called secularism proved to be hollow in practice. By 1938, Jinnah clearly stated: "Muslims cannot entrust their future to the goodwill of the Hindu majority." (Source: Delhi Address, 1938) Thus began his determined advocacy for Muslim identity and constitutional separation. Iqbal's Dream of a



**Separate Muslim Homeland** In 1930, Dr. Allama Muhammad Iqbal, philosopher and poet, laid out his vision: "I would like to see Punjab, NWFP, Sindh, and Balochistan amalgamated into a single Muslim state. Whether

within or outside the British Empire, such a bloc is essential." (Source: Allahabad Address, 1930) This was not a call for conflict - but a plea for self-preservation, grounded in faith and cultural continuity. **Historical Roots of the Divide** The Hindu-Muslim civilizational divide has deep historical foundations: 1. Muslim Rule in India: Centuries of Muslim governance left a legacy of resentment among Hindu elites. 2. Theological Contrasts: Monotheism vs polytheism; equality vs caste - conflicting paradigms. 3. Reconversion Movements: Shuddhi & Sangathan aimed to "Hinduize" Muslims, heightening tensions. 4. Linguistic Divide: Urdu vs Hindi became cultural battlegrounds. 5. Political Exclusion:

Post-1937 Congress rule marginalized Muslim representation. **Modern Standards** When Indian leaders invoke Hindu identity, it's called "cultural pride." But when Pakistani or Muslim leaders speak of distinctiveness, they are deemed "divisive." This reflects a global hypocrisy where Muslim narratives are delegitimized, while others are romanticized. **The Way Forward** 1. Reclaim the Narrative Pakistan must present the Two-Nation Theory with modern terminology and documented history. 2. Protect Minorities, Uphold Jinnah's Legacy As Jinnah said on 11 August 1947: "You are free to go to your temples, mosques, or any other place of worship in this State of Pakistan." 3. Foster Civil Discourse Both nations must

move from propaganda to honest introspection. 4. Assert Diplomatic Consistency Pakistan should spotlight Indian Muslim issues and counter disinformation with facts. **Final Thought** Pakistan was not born out of hate. It was founded on the need to protect a unique civilization - rooted in faith, law, and identity. When Gen. Asim Munir or others reaffirm this truth, they're not being "extremist" - they are simply honoring Jinnah and Iqbal's vision. To deny this truth is not only a historical error - it is to question the very foundation of Pakistan. All references are sourced from verified speeches, historical documents, and academic records. The views reflect journalistic analysis with historical grounding. Writer can be reached at asifyousafzai737@gmail.com





## In brief

### Mastermind of attack killed F.P. Report

KHAIRPUR: The mastermind behind the deadly attack on a session judge's convoy in Khairpur, identified as Syed Bhooral Shah, was killed in a police encounter. According to media reports, SSP Khairpur Hassan Sardar Niazi confirmed that two other suspects, Siraj Chachar and Abdul Hameed Narejo, were arrested in injured condition during a 20-minute exchange of gunfire with police during a search operation within the Pir Jo Goth police station jurisdiction. Weapons were recovered from the suspects. Addressing a press conference, SSP Niazi stated that police had been tracking the attackers using modern technology ever since the ambush. As officers moved in to apprehend the suspects, they were met with heavy gunfire, which led to a fierce 20-minute gunfight between both parties. He added that this operation was part of a sustained police crackdown following the May 31 armed assault on the convoy of Civil Judge Larkana Salman Mughal near Tando Masti, in Khairpur district. The judge was travelling from Sukkur to Larkana when his convoy was attacked by armed bandits. While the judge remained safe, one police constable, Maqbool Shaikh, was martyred, and two other officers sustained injuries. In immediate response to the attack, Sindh police and Pakistan Rangers launched a massive joint operation on June 1, arresting over 40 suspects across the Gambat sub-division and Tando Masti area. The raids, supported by armoured vehicles and advanced surveillance tech, successfully targeted and dismantled multiple dacoit hideouts.

### Rescue 1122 cancels holidays F.P. Report

DI I KHAN: The Rescue 1122 has cancelled leaves for its staff to facilitate and provide prompt services to citizens during Eidul Azha holidays in case of any emergency. In this regard, the district emergency service Rescue 1122 has chalked out a comprehensive plan which was reviewed in the recent meeting held with District Emergency Officer Engineer Fasihullah and it was attended by all station in-charges and heads of relevant departments. According to the spokesman of the district emergency service, Rescue 1122, several teams had been formed to remain alert 24/7 throughout the Eid holidays to ensure immediate response to any emergency. He added that ambulances, fire vehicles, and motorbike ambulances would be deployed at all major Eid prayer grounds. Similarly, diving teams would patrol the Indus River, Bhakkar Road Lake, and CRBC Canal to help prevent drowning incidents. Citizens have also been asked to contact emergency services via the Rescue 1122 helpline 1122, or the alternate number 0966-715166 in case of any emergency.

### Admn launches beautification F.P. Report

CHINIOT: In line with Chief Minister of Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif's vision, the district administration has tasked the Municipal Committee Chiniot with beautifying the city and providing basic facilities to citizens. Deputy Commissioner (DC) Safiullah Gondal led a crucial meeting to outline the plan. According to DC office, Khatm-e-Nabuwat Chowk will be renovated and beautified, with a focus on plantation and nighttime operation of the waterfall.

# 90-day detention without charge

## Balochistan introduces new law

### F.P. Report

QUETTA: The Balochistan Assembly passed the Anti-Terrorism (Balochistan Amendment) Act, 2025, granting sweeping powers to law enforcement agencies to detain individuals for up to 90 days without formally charging them, drawing attention from legal and human rights observers.

According to media reports, the bill, introduced by Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) lawmaker Mir Sadiq Sanjrani, permits preventive detention for inquiry purposes under suspicion of terrorism-related activities.

The law empowers designated authorities to issue detention orders for three months or longer, with oversight mechanisms kicking in if the period surpasses 90 days, in accordance with Article 10 of the

Constitution of Pakistan.

According to the legislation, individuals accused of aiding or facilitating terrorist acts can also be detained without formal charges for 90 days, provided that credible complaints or actionable intelligence are available. The investigative process will be carried out under the supervision of a Superintendent of Police (SP) or a Joint Investigation Team (JIT), depending on the law enforcement agency initiating the detention.

In cases where the armed forces or intelligence bodies issue the detention, the inquiry will be led by a JIT composed of officials from the respective agency. Investigators have been granted full powers to search premises, seize property, and arrest suspects during the inquiry period.

The law further authorises

the establishment of dedicated detention, rehabilitation, and deradicalisation centres for suspects detained under the anti-terror framework. Detainees can be transferred to such centres through a formal written request by the investigating agency.

To ensure oversight, the provincial government will establish boards comprising two civilians, two military officers, a psychiatrist, and a criminologist. These boards will be responsible for assessing the physical, mental, and ideological state of each detainee and making recommendations on their continued detention or transfer to a rehabilitation facility. Detainees will be allowed to meet family members, and legal representation will be duly informed about their location and condition, according to the newly passed provisions.

# Muqam inagurates solarization of DHQ Alpuri

### F.P. Report

SHANGLA: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan and SAFRON, and President of Pakistan Muslim League (N) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Engineer Amir Muqam, here Friday inaugurated the solarization project at the District Headquarters Hospital in Alpuri, Shangla.

After the inauguration, while addressing a large public gathering at Jirga Hall in Alpuri, the Federal Minister said that the success of Operation Iron Wall is a moment of gratitude for the Pakistan Armed Forces, Field Marshal COAS Syed Asim Munir, and the entire nation.

He said this historic success is giving Pakistan a new global identity and enhanced its stature and dignity among comity of nations. The Federal Minister stated that if the unity of the nation continues like this, no power in the world can defeat Pakistan. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal COAS Gen Syed Asim Munir, Pakistan is fully capable of facing every internal and external challenge.

The Federal Minister further said that even those who tried to defame



Pakistan under a specific nefarious agenda are now feeling ashamed. He said this time, PTI's protest call will expose their true face before everyone. The nation has completely rejected the politics of lies and chaos and youth of KP started distance of the agitation politics of PTI.

Engr Amir Muqam said that PTI failed to address masses problems in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa despite its 12 years rule. Amir Muqam reiterated his strong commitment that whether it is an earthquake, flood, or terrorism, he has always stood with the people in difficult times, continues to do so, and will always remain by their side.

He said PML-N Govt of Nawaz Sharif has established network of motorways, eradicated terrorism and ended loadshedding. Engr Amir Muqam said that

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Govt have saved the country from an imminent economic default and bankruptcy after 4 years poor Govt of PTI. He said that corruption cases resurfaced in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as evident of Kohistan scandal.

On this occasion, a large number of people participated despite it being a holiday. Senior officials from UNHCR, the Afghan Commissionerate, the Ministry of SAFRON, and other relevant institutions also attended the ceremony. The people thanked Engr Amir Muqam for fulfilling their longawaited demand of solarization of the Shangla DHQ hospital. They raised full throated slogans in favour of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, PML-N President Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and Engr Amir Muqam.

# AWKUM VC inaugurates art display

### Fazal Haq

MARDAN: The final year students of Pakhtunkhwa College of Art, Abdul Wali Khan University organized an art display, which was inaugurated by Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Jamil Ahmed. Speaking on the occasion, he said that this program is a good way to showcase the creative talents of the students and such programs help in the promotion of fine arts.

The Vice Chancellor appreciated the creative efforts of the students and encouraged them to participate in more such activities in the future. During the art

display held at Pakhtunkhwa College of Art, Abdul Wali Khan University, textile design students demonstrated their skills. They used different colors with great beauty and talent in their artwork, especially by designing old and antique items in a new way to highlight their beauty.

This effort has helped in the restoration and re-popularization of antique items, while the creativity of the students was also appreciated. The special guest present at the inauguration ceremony appreciated this excellent work of the students and termed it an important step in the pro-

motion of fine arts. Addressing the ceremony, the college principal, Fazal Sattar Durrani said that this excellent effort of the students not only shows their expertise in the field of fine arts, but also represents our cultural heritage.

He added that designing old objects in a modern way is a creative process through which we can learn from our past and create new dimensions in the arts of the future. He said that such programs provide opportunities for students to hone their skills and advance in the artistic field, and they are an important means for us to preserve and promote our culture.

# Minister attends reconciliation ceremony

### F.P. Report

KOHAT: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister on Law Aftab Alam Advocate has specially attended the historic reconciliation ceremony held between the two key parties, Saifur Rehman son of Gul Akhtar Khan and Nazir Khan son of Muhammad Yousuf Khan, in Bazi Khel area of Qom Zarghun Khel of Darra Adam Khel Tehsil of Kohat District. The reconciliation was made possible through the mediation and key reconciliation role of reputable elders, elites and social figures of the area.

According to details, there was an old and serious enmity going on between these parties in which 3 precious lives were also lost. Both the

parties, ending all old grudges and differences in the presence of the Provincial Law Minister, local elders and dignitaries and announced reconciliation in the spirit of brotherhood and peace. This historic reconciliation ended the long-standing tension in the region.

The local elders described the reconciliation as a courageous and positive step, saying that it not only brought peace to both the families but also promoted an atmosphere of peace and security in the entire region.

They emphasized that we have to forget the bitterness of the past and walk together for the better future of our youth. They termed this reconciliation as a good omen for the coming tomorrow. At

the end, special Dua was offered for the eternal peace of the martyrs and the ceremony was end with the resolve to maintain the atmosphere of peace and brotherhood.

## Youth killed F.P. Report

FAISALABAD: A youth was killed in a road accident, in the limits of Chak Jhumra police station. Police said on Friday that Malik Naveed, resident of Chak No.103-JB Barnala was riding a motorcycle when a rashly driven car hit his two-wheeler near Chak Jhumra on Sadaqat Textile Mills Road.



HYDERABAD: People selecting and purchasing sacrificial animals at cattle market.

## CTD rescues 5 kidnapped workers in operation F.P. Report

DI I KHAN: A swift and intense counterterrorism operation by the CTD and district police has resulted in the safe recovery of five out of thirteen workers from the Dera Ismail Khan (DI Khan) region, specifically from the areas of Kulachi and Daraban.

Acting on a tip-off about the kidnapping, the operation was led by District Police Officer (DPO) Sajjad Ahmad Sahibzada. Striking units of CTD and district police launched a coordinated quick-response operation. During the mission, a fierce exchange of gunfire took place between the security forces and the kidnappers. Despite the dangerous conditions, five hostages were successfully rescued. Efforts are still underway to recover the remaining eight abducted workers.

DPO Sahibzada confirmed that the search and strike operation will continue until all hostages are safely reunited with their families. "God willing, we will ensure the safe return of all kidnapped individuals," he stated with determination.

During the operation, security forces also dismantled several terrorist hideouts. Authorities arrested 13 individuals, including suspected militants and facilitators allegedly connected to the abductions and broader militant activity in the region. It is important to note that anti-state elements have been actively involved in the Dera Ismail Khan area, often targeting law enforcement personnel and civilians alike. These groups have been responsible for a series of violent incidents, including abductions and assaults on police.

One such incident occurred on April 30, 2025, when terrorists launched a brazen attack on Daraban Police Station using heavy weaponry. In a commendable display of resistance, police personnel prevented the attackers from breaching the premises. The standoff lasted nearly an hour before reinforcements arrived, and the militants retreated without causing any casualties.

## Robber held after shootout F.P. Report

VEHARI: An alleged robber was arrested after a shootout with police near here on Friday. According to police, a team of crime control department was stationed at Kitab Qalam Chowk when two suspects riding on a motorcycle appeared. The police signalled them to stop, but they opened fire.

The police also returned fire in self-defence. After a brief encounter, one of the suspects identified as Muhammad Imran, resident of WB/011 of Vehari was found lying injured by the firing of his own accomplice. The robber was involved in more than 39 cases of robbery, theft, and other street crimes. A search operation was launched to arrest the fleeing suspect.

# Journalism Dept Board of Study meeting held

### Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at Kohat University held its 6th Board of Studies meeting, during which the curriculum was revised and structured in accordance with the guidelines provided by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan.

The meeting was chaired by the Head of the Department, Mr. Anwar Khan. Renowned communication experts including Professor Dr. Faizullah Jan from the Department of Journalism, University of Peshawar; Dr. Majid Al-Ghaffar, Chairman, Depar-



ment of Communication and Media Studies, Hazara University, Mansehra; and Dr. Muhammad Riaz, Chairman, Riphah Institute of Media Studies, attended the meeting as subject specialists.

From Kohat University, Lecturer Amna Gul, Dr. Rehmanullah, Rashid Ishaq, Fazal Wahid, and Director Academics Muhammad Zeeshan also participated in the meeting.

The participants unanimously approved the proposed courses in line with HEC's recommended framework to ensure the provision of quality and contemporary education for journalism students. At the conclusion of the meeting, Chairman Anwar Khan thanked all attendees and termed the initiative a milestone in the academic progress.

# Promotion committee meeting held

### F.P. Report

KOHAT: In light of the directions of the Chief Secretary

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, an important meeting for the promotion of industry and trade in Kohat Division was held with the Commissioner Kohat Division Syed Motasim Billah Shah in the chair at Commissioner's House Kohat today. The meeting beside others, was also attended by the Chairman DDAC Kohat Shafi Jan MPA and President Kohat Chambers of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) Rasheed Paracha, authorities concerned of various government departments at the district and regional levels, Reps of KCCI and Small Industrial Estate.

The aim of the meeting was to review the problems faced by the local industrialists, formulate a coordinated strategy to solve them and promote cooperation between the public and private sectors for industrial development.

President KCCI while highlighting the problems of industrialists, presented viable suggestions for its solution. He added, if the

government ensures its implementation, it is possible to eliminate unemployment in the area and give a new direction to the economy. Chairman DDAC Shafi Jan and Commissioner Kohat Motasim Billah Shah, while discussing the issues, said that the government is committed to building the industrial sector on a strong footings and the administration will ensure full cooperation with all the stakeholders associated with the industry and trade sectors. They said that all possible steps will be taken to increase production, investment and employment opportunities at local level.

At the end, the participants thanked the Commissioner Kohat Division and the district administration for focusing on this important issue and bringing all the stakeholders together on one platform. The meeting expressed the hope that this consultative process would lead to effective policy making and practical industrial development in the future.

Meanwhile Commissioner Kohat Division also met a delegation of the

Hangu Ulema led by Maulana Hafiz Abdul Rafi at his office and discussed with them the issues of socialization of mosques and its other needs, issues related to local administration, pending honorarium of Imams, law and order situation, peaceful conduct of the upcoming Eid-ul-Adha, Muharram-ul-Haram and Rabi-ul-Awwal, promotion of religious harmony, tolerance and brotherhood in the society.

Commissioner Kohat while assuring early solution to the problems of the delegation said that Ulema are the crown of our heads and their positive and key role in every matter can't be ignored. He specially mentioned the effective role of Ulema in Fitna-tul-Khawarij, polio campaigns and the recent Bonyan-ul-Marsoos operation against India.

Members of the delegation thanked the Commissioner Kohat for taking keen interest in resolving the issues of religious scholars, mosques and Deeni Madaris and pledged to support and stand by the State on all important and sensitive issues.

# Dir business community leaders visit district jail

### Haleem Asad

LOWER DIR: A delegation of the Timergara traders' body, led by its President Haji Anwar ud Din, visited the District Jail Timergara in a goodwill gesture ahead of Eid-ul-Azha here the other day. The visit aimed to express solidarity and compassion with the inmates during the festive occasion. As a token of goodwill, the delegation distributed boxes of sweets among the prisoners to help them feel included in the Eid celebrations.

During the visit, the delegation praised the Jail Superintendent Ayub Bacha for the remarkable reforms introduced in a short span of time. They commended the improved cleanliness, better facilities for inmates, and overall discipline maintained in the prison.

Delegation members noted that Superintendent Bacha had not only transformed the jail's environment but also taken serious steps to make it a genuine rehabilitation center. At the end of the visit,

Superintendent Ayub Bacha appreciated the business community's thoughtful initiative and presented an honorary shield to Haji Anwar ud Din and his team. The gesture was widely lauded as a significant step toward promoting compassion and social welfare in the community.

**Body found:** The volunteers of Al-Khidmat Foundation recovered the body of a seminary student from the Panjkora River at Dodbba after a three-day search here the other day. According to sources, the student had gone missing in the river earlier this week, prompting a coordinated search effort. Teams from Al-Khidmat Foundation, along with other rescue units, participated in the operation despite challenging conditions.

After tireless efforts, the AKF team successfully located and retrieved the body. It was later handed over to the family in Dodbba for burial. Local residents and the victim's family expressed deep gratitude to the rescue

teams, especially the Al-Khidmat Foundation, for their commitment and humanitarian service.

Meanwhile, one Ziaullah, 23, a resident of Siyar was killed while three others were injured when a passenger van bound for Timergara from Siyar plunged into a deep ravine near the Ghat area here the other day. According to eyewitnesses, the vehicle lost control and fell into the ravine while descending toward Timergara. Rescue teams arrived on scene swiftly, extricated all occupants, administered first aid in the ambulance, and transported them to Timergara Hospital.

One of the injured, Mursalin, was referred to Peshawar via a Rescue Health Referral ambulance for further treatment. Meanwhile, Rescue 1122's recovery unit retrieved the wrecked vehicle from the gorge. Local authorities at Khall Police Station have registered a case and initiated a formal investigation into the circumstances surrounding the crash.





## Cuba warns US pressure could trigger migration surge

HAVANA (AFP): Cuba warned that US pressure could lead to a new surge in migration, as Washington imposed fresh sanctions to curb the island's key money-maker of supplying doctors abroad. President Donald Trump has ramped up pressure since returning to the White House in January, including swiftly reversing an agreement by predecessor Joe Biden that removed Cuba from a list of state sponsors of terrorism.

Johana Tablada, deputy general director of the Cuban foreign ministry's US division, said on a visit to Washington that Trump's policies were "deliberately directed to provoke starvation" and to "destabilize Cuba." "It looks really obvious for us that reinforcing the tools to suffocate the Cuban economy will probably trigger the same result as last time, during the first term of Trump. It triggers historic massive migration," she told reporters. Cuba in recent years has seen its biggest

wave of emigration since Fidel Castro's 1959 communist revolution, as the island faces economic headwinds and after rare mass protests in 2021.

The island has lost around one million inhabitants -- or around a tenth of its population -- since 2012, according to census data. Nearly 700,000 Cubans entered the United States, legally or illegally, between January 2022 and August 2024. Trump has made mass deportations of migrants a key priority. But Tablada said the Trump administration has suspended once-routine migration talks with Cuba. She said that Cuba nonetheless has accepted a plane of citizens deported from the United States each month, continuing an arrangement with the Biden administration.

"When I tell you that Cuba is the adult in the room, I am not exaggerating," she said. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, a Cuban-American and vociferous critic of Havana,

has said that the only item of business worth discussing with Cuba is ending the government. He announced that the United States would restrict visas from several Central American government officials, who were not named, for cooperating with Cuba to bring in doctors. "The Cuban labor export program abuses the participants, enriches the corrupt Cuban regime and deprives everyday Cubans of essential medical care that they desperately need in their homeland," he said in a statement. Cuba has sent doctors overseas for years in a key source of soft power -- and revenue.

Cuba dispatched 22,632 medical professionals to 57 countries in 2023, with Cuba earning \$6.3 billion in 2018 and \$3.9 billion in 2020, in part in the form of oil from Venezuela. On a trip in March, Jamaica led Caribbean countries in rejecting Rubio's pressure, saying the Cuban doctors were vital for them and enjoyed rights.

## Nigeria's defence chief proposes fencing borders

ABUJA (Reuters): Nigeria's defence chief called for the country's borders with its four neighbours to be completely fenced to curb the entrance of armed groups amid escalating insecurity.

Nigeria's military has been strained by widespread security issues, particularly a 16-year insurgency in the northeast led by Islamist militant group Boko Haram and its offshoot Islamic State West Africa Province. Security forces and civilians have been attacked and killed and tens of thousands of people have been displaced. Defence Chief of Staff, General Christopher Musa, who spoke at a security conference in the capital Abuja, said "border management is very critical," citing Pakistan's 1,350 km (839 miles) fence with Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia's 1,400 km barrier with Iraq as successful precedents.

This is the first time a top Nigerian official has publicly suggested such a measure. "Other countries, because of the level of insecurity they have, had to fence their borders," he said. Nigeria borders Niger Republic, Cameroon, Benin, and Chad, which are all grappling with escalating militant campaigns across the Sahel. Nigerian authorities often attribute its prolonged insurgency, including recent attacks on military stations, to foreign fighter infiltration. Nigeria's longest border (1,975 km) is with Cameroon in the northeast, a Boko Haram hotspot. It also shares 1,500 km with Niger and 85 km with Chad, nations that have lost territory to armed groups. Musa warned Nigeria's perceived wealth makes it a target. "It is Nigeria that everybody is interested in. That is why we need to secure fully and take control of our borders," he said. "It is critical for our survival and sovereignty."



GAZA STRIP: Palestinian children gather at a hot meal distribution point in the Nuseirat refugee camp.

## French policeman to go on trial over 2023 killing of teen

PARIS (AFP): A French policeman who shot and killed a teenager at point-blank range in 2023 in a Paris suburb, sparking days of riots, is to go on trial charged with murder, a court said. The trial of the officer, who has been charged with the murder of Nahel Merzouk, 17, could take place in the second or third quarter of 2026, the court in the Nanterre suburb, where the killing took place, said in a joint statement with investigating magistrates.

The announcement coincides with rising tensions in France after attacks against Muslims in recent weeks, as well as the burning of a Koran in the southeast of the country. The officer, identified as Florian M., was released from custody in November 2023 after five months in detention. Mobile phone footage of an officer shooting Nahel inside a car during a traffic stop on a busy street went viral. The scene sparked anger and protests that degenerated into rioting and led to scenes of devastation nationwide. The police initially maintained that Nahel had driven his car at the officer. But this was contradicted by the video, which showed two officers standing at a stationary car, with one pointing a weapon at its driver.

"Nothing shows Florian M. was authorised in the circumstances to use his weapon, in violation of the principles of proportionality and absolute necessity," according to the written order issued by two investigating magistrates for the trial, which was seen by AFP. However legal proceedings were dropped against the accused officer's colleague who was present during the incident. He had been investigated as an "assisted witness", which in the French system is one step before being charged. "This order for a trial is both disappointing and not surprising," said Laurent-Franck Lienard, Florian M.'s lawyer, explaining that the investigating judge was always likely to follow the prosecution's push for a trial. The lawyer told AFP he would lodge an appeal against the order.

"We maintain that the shooting was legitimate," he said. Eric Henry, of the Alliance police union which has vigorously defended the actions of the police officer, told CNews TV the announcement of the trial sent "a disastrous signal to our colleague, to the police world". But Frank Berton, a lawyer for Nahel's mother Mounia Merzouk, said he was satisfied with the decision to move to a trial. "We are just seeing the law being applied," he said. "Now all that remains is to convince the court." The move to try the officer over the death of Nahel, who was of north African origin, comes as new tensions have emerged

over racism and security in France. A man who had posted racist videos shot dead his Tunisian neighbour and badly wounded a Turkish man in the south of France at the weekend, and a Malian man was stabbed to death in a mosque in April. Interior Minister Bruno Retailleau, who is taking an increasingly hard line on immigration issues, has faced accusations of not bringing firm enough against such crimes and even fuelling a racist climate.

But he said that the killing of Tunisian Hichem Miraoui in Puget-sur-Argens was "clearly a racist crime," "probably also anti-Muslim," and "perhaps also a terrorist crime." "Racism is not France," Retailleau told the National Assembly. According to Le Parisien newspaper, the suspect in that killing, who is under arrest, said he "swore allegiance to the French flag" and called on the French to "shoot" people of foreign origin in one of his videos posted on social media. Antiterrorism prosecutors have taken over the investigation into the case, the first such racist attack linked to the far right to be dealt with as "terrorism" since their office was set up in 2019. Meanwhile, a person stole a Koran from a mosque near the southeastern French city of Lyon and set it on fire, religious leaders and a police source said.

## Hegseth to skip meeting on mly aid to Ukraine

WASHINGTON (AP): For the first time since the US created an international group to coordinate military aid to Ukraine three years ago, America's Pentagon chief will not be in attendance when more than 50 other defense leaders meet. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, who returned from a national security conference in Singapore, will not arrive in Brussels, after the Ukraine Defense Contact Group's meeting is over.

A US official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss scheduling details, confirmed that Hegseth also will not participate by video conference. It is the latest in a series of steps that the US has taken to distance itself from the Ukraine war effort. And it comes on the heels of French President Emmanuel Macron's warning at the security conference last weekend that the US and others risk a dangerous double standard if their concentration on a potential conflict with China is done at the cost of abandoning Ukraine. France and other NATO nations are concerned that the US is considering withdrawing troops from

Europe to shift them to the Indo-Pacific. Macron said abandoning Ukraine would eventually erode US credibility in deterring any potential conflict with China over Taiwan.

Hegseth's predecessor, Lloyd Austin, created the group after Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022. Since then, more than 50 member nations have collectively provided Ukraine with some \$126 billion in weapons and military assistance, including over \$66.5 billion from the US. Under Austin's leadership, the US served as chair of the group, and he and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff attended monthly meetings, which were both in person and by video. Hegseth has upended that position by stepping away from a leadership role, providing no new military aid and now abandoning the gathering altogether. During his first meeting with the group and a subsequent NATO defense ministers gathering in Brussels in February, Hegseth warned that Ukraine should abandon its NATO bid and its push to reclaim all Russian-occupied territory. And he signaled that President Donald

Trump is determined to get Europe to assume most of the financial and military responsibilities for Ukraine's defense.

Since Trump took office, there have been no new announcements of US military or weapons aid to Ukraine. Hegseth also turned leadership of the group over to Germany and the United Kingdom. While he will not attend session, Gen. Christopher Cavoli, head of US European Command and NATO's supreme allied commander, will be there. In Washington, meanwhile, a senior Ukrainian delegation led by First Deputy Prime Minister and Economy Minister Yulia Svyrydenko is in town for talks about defense, sanctions and post-war recovery, said Andrii Yermak, the head of Ukraine's presidential office. The Ukrainians met with US special envoys Steve Witkoff and Keith Kellogg, discussing recent talks with the Russians and conditions on the battlefield. Yermak posted on social media. Svyrydenko and Yermak also are expected to meet with Secretary of State Marco Rubio and other officials.

## 3 Salvadoran ex-military convicted

SAN SALVADOR (AFP): A former defense minister in El Salvador and two retired colonels were found guilty of the 1982 killings of four Dutch journalists during the country's civil war, a lawyer for families of the deceased said. A five-member jury sentenced the defendants, now in their 80s or 90s, to 15 years in prison after an 11-hour session on the first day of the trial, attorney Pedro Cruz said outside the courthouse.

In a crime that shocked the world, Koos Koster, Jan Kuiper, Hans ter Laag and Joop Willemsen were killed while filming a television documentary. More than 75,000 people were killed in El Salvador's 1980-1992 civil war pitting the US-backed military against leftist guerrillas. The Dutch reporters worked for IKON TV, a Dutch channel founded by several churches.

The accused are General Jose Guillermo Garcia, 91, former police colonel Francisco Antonio Moran, 93, and ex-infantry brigade commander Mario Reyes Mena, 85. None of them were in court for the trial, which was conducted with press and held in the northern city of Chalatenango. "The fight against impunity took a long time, but it was won," the Dutch ambassador for all of Central America, Arjen van den Berg, said outside the courthouse. In 1993, a UN-sponsored Truth Commission found the journalists had walked into an ambush planned by Reyes, who lives in the United States, and with the knowledge of other officers. The Salvadoran Supreme Court approved an extradition request for Reyes in March, but there has been no progress so far.

Garcia and Moran are under police surveillance in a private hospital in San Salvador. The defendants had faced up to 30 years in prison but got less time because of their age and ill health, the lawyer Cruz said. The NGOs Fundacion Comunicandonos and the Salvadoran Association for Human Rights hailed the trial as a "decisive step" in the search for truth and justice.

## More white South Africans arrive in US under a new refugee program

JOHANNESBURG (AP): Africans arrived at Dulles International Airport in Virginia on a chartered flight last month under the new program announced by US President Donald Trump in February. The Trump administration fast-tracked the resettlement of white South Africans after indefinitely suspending other US refugee programs.

The Trump administration said it is offering refugee status to white South Africans it alleges are being persecuted by their Black-led government and are victims of racially motivated violence. The South African government has denied the allegations and said they are a mischaracterization of the country. Trump has falsely claimed that white South African farmers are targeted in widespread attacks that amount to genocide and are having their land taken

away. Trump confronted South African President Cyril Ramaphosa with those baseless claims during a meeting at the White House last month. Ramaphosa has said the relatively small number of attacks on white farmers are part of South Africa's larger problems with violent crime, which affects all races.

The Trump administration initially said the refugee program was aimed at members of South Africa's Afrikaner minority, who are descendants of mainly Dutch and French colonial settlers. In new guidance published by the US Embassy last month, applicants must be "a member of a racial minority" in South Africa and "must be able to articulate a past experience of persecution or fear of future persecution." There are approxi-

mately 2.7 million Afrikaners among South Africa's population of 62 million, which is more than 80% Black. They are not the only white minority. There are around 4.5 million whites in total, including those with British or other heritage. The US Embassy spokesperson said the US "continues to review inquiries from individuals who have expressed interest to the embassy in resettling to the United States and is reaching out to eligible individuals for refugee interviews and processing." While US officials have not said how many South Africans have applied to be relocated, Kleynhans said there have been around 8,000 applications. Another group helping white South Africans apply for refugee status has said tens of thousands have applied.

## ‘Washington must get ties back on right track’

BEIJING (Reuters): The US should create the necessary conditions for bilateral relations to get back onto "the right track," China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi told the US ambassador to Beijing, according to a ministry statement.

After trade talks last month in Geneva, China has "conscientiously and strictly" implemented the consensus reached by both sides, but it is "regrettable that the US recently introduced a series of 'negative' measures", which China firmly opposes, Wang told Ambassador David Perdue. Bilateral relations are at a critical juncture, and dialogue and cooperation are "the only correct choice,"

Wang said.

Perdue said in an X post after the meeting that he had emphasized US President Donald Trump's priorities on trade,entanyl, and illegal immigration, adding that "communication is vital" to US-China relations. Trump accused China of violating a bilateral deal to roll back tariffs and trade restrictions, and the US has ordered curbs on chip design software and other shipments to China.

The Geneva truce to dial back triple-digit tariffs for 90 days prompted a massive relief rally in global stocks. But it did nothing to address the underlying reasons for Trump's tariffs on

Chinese goods, mainly longstanding US complaints about China's state-dominated, export-driven economic model. Senior US officials have said this week that Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping would speak soon to iron out trade issues, including a dispute over critical minerals and China's restrictions on exports of certain minerals. White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt told a regular news briefing the Trump administration "is actively monitoring China's compliance with the Geneva trade agreement," and added that "there will be a leader to leader talk very soon."

## Dutch govt faces collapse as Wilders threatens to exit coalition

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP): The Netherlands' 11-month-old coalition government appeared close to collapse after far-right leader Geert Wilders said he would "sleep on" a decision on whether to pull out of the fragile four-party pact.

Last week, Wilders demanded the government sign on to a 10-point plan that aims to radically slash migration, including using the army to guard land borders and turning away all asylum-seekers. He said that if immigration policy is not toughened up, his party "is out of the Cabinet."

The government crisis comes just three weeks before the Netherlands is scheduled to host a summit

of NATO leaders in The Hague. After talks with the leaders of the three other parties that make up the ruling coalition, Wilders told reporters "we will meet each other tomorrow, but it doesn't look good."

Wilders has built his political career on calling for hard-line policies against Islam and migration in the Netherlands. Long in opposition, his party won elections in November 2023 and is the largest in the coalition. Now he says his patience has run out after months of talks and little action from the coalition to crack down on migration. After meeting, Wilders' three coalition partners told him to come

up with concrete proposals for changes to the current agreement and expressed frustration at his repeated threats to bring down the government. "If your goal is to blow things up, just say so," Dilan Yesilgöz, leader of the right-wing People's Party for Freedom and Democracy, told reporters after the hour-long meeting.

According to the leader of the populist Farmers Citizens Movement party Caroline van der Plas, "The Netherlands does not like quitters." In February, Wilders also threatened to back out of the coalition if a pair of bills limiting asylum didn't pass, but he ultimately backed down.

## Two boat operators charged in girl's death in Florida

MIAMI (AP): Misdemeanor charges have been filed against the man who was operating the boat that fatally struck a 15-year-old girl off a South Florida beach last year, as well as the man who was operating the boat she had been wake-

boarding behind, authorities announced.

Carlos Guillermo Alonso, 79, was charged April 28 with violating two US Coast Guard navigational rules, and Edmund Richard Hartley, 31, was charged April 29 with violating four

Coast Guard rules, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission said in a press release. Attorneys for Alonso and Hartley didn't immediately respond to emails seeking comment. They have both pleaded not guilty.

In May 2024, 15-year-old Ella Adler and another girl were wakeboarding behind a 42-foot (13-meter) Hanse Fjord walk-around near Key Biscayne, just south of Miami, before falling off at different spots, officials said.



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## Lessons from far-right violence

ON May 29, 1993, five young girls and women of Turkish origin were killed in the western German city of Solingen, near Cologne, by neo-Nazis. Far-right extremists set the Genc family's house on fire. Their "crime" was to be of Turkish origin. Similar large-scale assaults on refugee homes happened in other German cities such as Hoyerswerda, Rostock-Lichtenhagen, and Molln. While their relatives try to preserve their memory and are involved in fighting racism, German politicians have been pilgrimaging to the site of the Solingen attack ever since, for more than 30 years. But already back then, the German Bundestag (parliament) became a place of fierce debate about restricting the right to asylum and an increasing anti-immigration sentiment.

While Germany was not home to a far-right political party for several decades following the end of World War II, the recent rise of the Alternative for Germany (AfD) gave racist talking points a much larger podium. In the last elections, they almost doubled their electoral gains and rose to become the second-largest political party in the German Bundestag, falling only slightly behind the main governing conservative party. But the hypothesis that neo-Nazis in parliament would diminish their presence in the underground did not manifest. According to the latest annual report issued by Germany's domestic secret service in 2024, the Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV), the number of far-right extremists was around 40,600, up nearly 2,000 from 2022, with more than one-third seen as prepared to use violence. Some 1,270 acts of right-wing extremist violence were recorded, and racist offenses saw an overall increase to 10,400 during the same period, a 39% rise.

The wave of far-right violence on asylum houses in the 1990s was no stand-alone event. One remembers the infamous National Socialist Underground (NSU) murders, where a series of racist murders by the NSU between 2000 and 2007 killed 10 people, targeting primarily people of Turkish origin. In 2020, another racially motivated violent attack in Hanau killed nine people. In the last 10 years, more than 100 attacks on mosques have been registered annually. But the violence did not stop at the doorstep of racially marginalized people. In 2019, the murder of a conservative pro-immigration regional governor named Walter Lübcke shook the German public. While the German public treated it as a lone-wolf attack, the Ministry of Interior had already revealed to the Leftist opposition party in 2018 that their secret service had collected more than 25,000 names that were put on so-called death lists by far-right groups operating in the underground.

These groups and the violent activities against marginalized groups and minorities, from Jews and Muslims to immigrants in general, did not emerge out of the blue. They have to be seen as linked to the demise of trust for the state institutions and the increasing support of far-right-leaning movements and parties. The German state has put the AfD, which currently even tops some polls, under the surveillance of the BfV, arguing that it regards it as extremist. Will this change anything? While some might feel less confident in expressing their allegiance, support, or membership in public, it is hard to believe that ostracization will lead to a softening or marginalization of the AfD. Rather, this latest move might only feed the narrative of the state being an enemy of the people and serving the special interests of the wealthy and powerful liberal elites. Rather than outlawing the AfD, a more democratic response would address the root causes of its rise: the failure of political elites to genuinely represent all citizens, combat poverty and social exclusion, listen to marginalized groups—including the working poor and racial minorities—and articulate a vision for a fairer future in Germany.

## French attempts to 'stop the boats'

ON paper, if I had to choose between the French police and our own Border Force to try and prevent people smugglers and illegal migrants crossing the Channel, I would choose the French police. Faced with the prospect of violent resistance, this paper reports that officials in Paris are debating whether officers "should be armed and wearing body armour when they engage the boats". Imagine the furore if that were suggested here. Sir Keir Starmer could certainly use some cavalry about now. But are les gendarmes really going to ride in and save the day? That feels like a long shot. Successive British governments have several times announced with great fanfare this or that arrangement with France, only for the small boats to just keep coming.

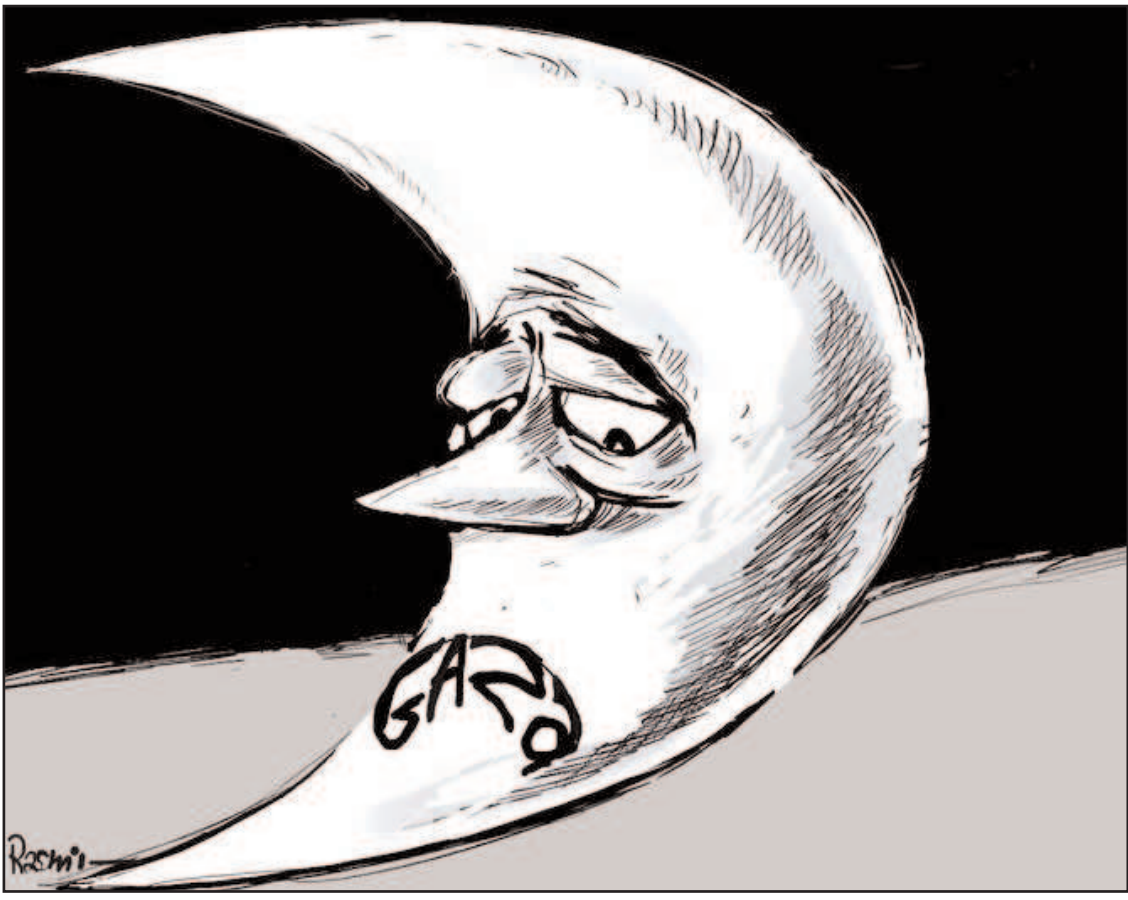
We pay a lot for the privilege too. The latest tranche of spending, covering 2023 to 2025, was a cool 541 million (about £476 million when the deal was signed). It's not that the French pocket the cash and don't do anything – crossings would be even higher without their efforts. But "even higher" is cold comfort to British politicians facing mounting public anger at a completely unacceptable level of crossings, especially when photos or footage appears of French officers standing idly by as a boat pushes off.

But France does not have a huge incentive, beyond our cash, to keep these people in France rather than letting them set sail for their intended destination. Paris might also, and fairly, blame the UK's continual refusal to address the pull factors that attract people here – a poorly-policed black economy, for one – for creating a migration superhighway to their northern coast in the first place. Perhaps this move does represent a sea change (no pun intended). Having previously refused to engage boats at sea, France now says it will (although a lot depends on how they end up interpreting the need to "respect the law of the sea").

One must pity the Conservatives, who struck several expensive deals with Paris, reading that in this latest deal our two governments have confirmed "for the first time, the need for action to prevent irregular crossings of the Channel". The first time! But when Emmanuel Macron's embattled government next faces down the Rassemblement National, is he really going to want Sir Keir Starmer boasting of his strenuous efforts to keep illegal migrants in France, all for the benefit of Les Rosbifs? I'll believe it when I see it.

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## Ukraine's audacious drone attacks are a recipe for Russian Paranoia

Kevin Riehle

**I**N his classic book "Catch-22," Joseph Heller coined the maxim, "Just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they aren't after you." The phrase acknowledges the difference, but also the occasional overlap, between perception and reality, fear and fearsomeness, manufactured threat and genuine menace.

The Russian leadership, led by President Vladimir Putin and instrumentalized by the Federal Security Service, has fostered a societal paranoia of spies, saboteurs, terrorists and "foreign agents." That paranoia is useful for maintaining the patriotic fervor that the government requires to keep the Russian people aligned behind the war in Ukraine.

Institutional paranoia is part of the Russian government's philosophy that political unity is strength while political division is weakness. If leaders can maintain unity of mind and purpose amongst the Russian population, especially concerning Ukraine, then Russia appears strong, and appearing strong is the objective. However, paranoia is fragile. To maintain it, the Russian security system must portray itself as invincible, catching genuine and imagined malefactors and broadcasting their arrests to blur the line between real and illusion. That includes televising arrest operations showing officers wearing jackets emblazoned with the letters "FSB." It includes arresting people for espionage or terrorism, but keeping the evidence secret.

There is a fine line between sustaining paranoia and allowing it to get out of hand. Sustaining it requires communicating a contradictory message, keeping threat perceptions at a shrill pitch but simultaneously presenting the image of having everything under control. With its authority to stage sudden arrests, summon people for prophylactic interviews, recruit donositelli — "snitches" — and conduct ubiquitous monitoring of internal communications, the FSB must be the object of greater fear than the real threats to Russia's national

security. The security service must appear to have the upper hand, or its repressive methods are unnecessary, ineffective and even extreme. The Russian security system becomes tautological: it only works if it works. Any cracks in the system bring the whole house of cards crashing down.

**Although he did not say it explicitly, he implied that local Russians were involved in supporting the operation. Ukrainian media subsequently claimed that the "office" where one of the attacks was organized was located next to an FSB regional directorate.**

What happens when real attacks occur, and the bona fide threat becomes more fearsome than the security system itself? Such is the case with drone attacks on four Russian air bases spread across thousands of kilometers on June 1. Local officials downplayed the damage and the FSB reported immediate arrests. Simultaneously, the FSB announced arrests of Ukrainian "saboteurs" in the Primorsky region, claiming to have thwarted a planned attack, as if to say, "Everything is under control — look over here instead." Nevertheless, Ukraine's audacious drone attack undermines the Russian security system itself just as much as it poses a military threat. The reality of the threat risks exposing the security system as incompetent. Heavy-handed security measures didn't work.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky challenged that perception head-on in his public statement about the attacks. Despite FSB reports of arrests, Zelensky said "all the people who helped us" were withdrawn from Russian territory in time and are safe. Although he did not say it explicitly, he implied that local Russians were involved in supporting the operation. Ukrainian media subsequently claimed that the "office" where one of the attacks was organized was

located next to an FSB regional directorate. Those statements are calculated to portray the Russian security system as vulnerable. Zelensky showed that Ukraine can take control of Russian societal paranoia.

The situation is analogous to the March 2024 terrorist attack on the Crocus City Hall concert venue in

Feb. 27, 2025. Putin's language was nearly identical to that he used in 2024: "The FSB is a strong, reliable, and effective link in the system of providing national security," he said. Although he cited no statistics, he continued: "Regular summaries and informant reports show that the activity of foreign special services during the special military operation has grown."

After the Crocus City Hall attack, Russian officials immediately blamed Ukraine. According to the FSB's logic, the attack must be the work of the Ukrainian enemy, thus justifying the violence wrought on Ukraine and the repressive tactics applied inside Russia to protect against Ukrainian spies. Those claims turned out to be fiction — Ukraine was not involved. The façade of Russian societal unity, especially amongst religious confessions, was not as impenetrable as Putin made it sound. Though they produce a similar paranoia, drone attacks on Russian air bases on June 1 reached an entirely new level. They were spread across the country, not just in Moscow. They targeted the Russian military, not civilians. And the Ukrainian government took public credit for the attacks, with Zelensky calling them "justified and deserved."

The FSB will crack down hard on Russian society and marshal its domestic security powers in response to these drone attacks. But the FSB itself was the victim. If it cannot monitor threats under its own nose, what can it do? Are the FSB's repressive KGB-like tactics meaningless? The Ukrainian drone attack forces the FSB and the Russian people to face such questions. Social paranoia is a fickle partner. When it is under control, it can be useful in maintaining a compliant population. But it can turn on its master when they are unable to control it. The Ukrainian drone attacks could be a turning point in that sense of control, convincing the Russian people, as Heller said, that the FSB is not protecting them from the forces that may be after them.

The Moscow Times

## Why is defence such a hard sell?

Martin Kettle

**D**EFFENCE reviews and foreign policy resets seem to turn up almost as often as the Sussexes' lifestyle brand relaunches these days. Labour's strategic defence review this week comes less than two years after the Conservatives' hardly less detailed defence white paper in July 2023, which in turn was a "refresh" of Boris Johnson's ambitious integrated review of defence and foreign policy of March 2021. By this measure, it must be doubtful if, come the 2030s, analysts will look back on Keir Starmer and John Healey's review and say it broke the mould.

The Labour government was entitled to try to put its own stamp on defence policy, of course, and its review team of George Robertson, Richard Barrons and Fiona Hill did a good, reasonably independent job. Yet this 2020s pattern of repeated strategic adaptation and refocus feels like the new normal now. It is also true that grand strategy does not often survive prolonged contact with the real world. In wartime, as the US general, later president, Dwight Eisenhower once put it, plans are useless but planning is essential.

Today, though, war is no longer an academic possibility. So defence policy must adapt afresh, and at pace. Labour's defence review does not always do this convincingly. Most of the imperatives and innovations of the day revolve around resisting the threat from Russia and adapting to the new weaponry of the drone and cyber age. At times, though, this is hard to reconcile with the review's dogged assumption that the transatlantic alliance will remain the bedrock of that resistance.

Johnson's 2021 review aimed to recast British foreign policy in the light of Brexit. In some ways, like Johnson's delusional British tilt towards Asia, it represents a worldview that has gone with the wind. In others, especially on Russia, it describes a conflict that still confronts Starmer today. Yet Johnson's review came out as Covid was starting to upend the global economy and before Russia invaded Ukraine. The 2023 refresh took those newer convulsions on board but could not, in its turn, know about the most recent disruption: Donald Trump's return.

It is pathetic and shameful that Trump's name does not appear once throughout the new defence review's 140 pages. Its absence reflects Labour's — and London's — bred-in-the-bone fear of offending the US president. Even so, it cannot disguise that this is a defence review for Britain in an age of greater US isolationism. Trump's unreliability and his administration's manifest contempt for Europe cast a long shadow over the whole document and over the government's determination, even in the context of next week's Whitehall spending review, to prioritise defence in line with Nato urgings.

Since history never stops, this week's review may itself soon look out of date. Events may grab hold of the steering wheel at any time. China may invade Taiwan, for example, or Russia turn up the heat in the Baltic or against Moldova. Iran may finally test a nuclear weapon. Trump may annex Greenland. Even the ending of the Ukraine war, not just its continuation as before, would necessitate a big course correction and reshifting of priorities for British

policy too.

If there is a thread running through the document, it is that 21st-century Britain is a big, but not a global power, whose security priority lies in Europe, not elsewhere. The overriding goals for British defence policy are thus, as always, to defend the nation against direct threats, and to make the necessary contribution to the maintenance of peace, freedom and commerce on the European continent. Brexit did not change that. But it was a dramatic illustration of how easy it is to delude a nation that there are magic answers to grindingly difficult problems.

It is a mistake, however, to seek blind refuge in the belief that the world has always been a conflicted and messy place, and therefore to assume that 2025 is merely another unfortunate iteration of it. This may indeed be true in a very long view sense. But it does not adequately explain why 21st century governments in many liberal democracies — not least in Britain — struggle to mobilise national support to bring about almost any big and effective change, not just in defence policy but domestically.

It is not enough to blame Russia alone for the suffering in Ukraine, or to denounce the United States uniquely for turning its back on European security — even though both are hugely culpable. Part of the problem also lies closer to home. The issue is that while the liberal democratic nation state is the only meaningful game in town, it is no longer delivering what it once seemed uniquely capable of providing for its people.

The run-down of defence following the end of the cold war is merely one example of this widely felt failure, albeit an important one. One can select others from most areas of national life. They range from not embracing the digital revolution sufficiently to help rebuild British industry and education, through the failure to prioritise the care of an increasingly ageing population and the cynical depletion of parts of the welfare state, to the shameful pollution of rivers and lakes, the disdain for localism and the wilful neglect of national culture.

The results of this are inescapably wounding to politics itself. The most striking thing that has happened in the last 11 months is that Labour has managed to turn an election victory into what looks increasingly likely to be an election defeat when the time comes. Why has this happened? Not because Starmer and his ministers are bad people, or because they have bad values or even bad policies. Certainly not because voters want the Conservatives back. It has happened because liberal democratic governments are no longer able to command the necessary sustained public confidence, even through rocky times, to deliver what people once instinctively looked to them for.

That was true of the defence review this week, which was launched on to a sea of scepticism about Labour's ability to pay for its plans. It will be even more true of the spending review in a few days' time. The strands that once meaningfully bound people together within a shared national framework are weaker now. They may not be irreparable. But repairing them requires a lot of humility as well as much determination and a sprinkling of genius. There are no quick answers and it is a massively hard task.

The Guardian

## Starmer's defence pledges are all smoke and mirrors

Con Coughlin

Wishful thinking. This is a Prime Minister who, only a few weeks ago, was talking enthusiastically about putting British boots on the ground in Ukraine as part of his "coalition of the willing".

But he knew full well that the UK does not have the military resources necessary to sustain such a mission. Starmer's bold plan to dispatch a European "reassurance" force to Ukraine has now been quietly watered down to a more realistic support mission for the Ukrainian military. The Starmer's empty rhetoric regarding his grand ambitions for the defence review is likely to suffer a similar fate. It will inevitably become clear that, despite his boast that he is overseeing "the largest sustained increase in defence spending since the Cold War", the actual funding being made available is negligible.

Starmer's smoke and mir-

rors defence pledges are part of a long and undistinguished tradition of British governments making ambitious spending commitments for the Armed Forces they have absolutely no chance of fulfilling.

Former Conservative chancellor George Osborne, for example, made much political capital out of his claim that he had raised defence spending above the minimum 2 per cent of GDP level required by Nato. Closer examination of the figures showed this could only be met by "efficiency savings" in defence spending that were unachievable.

It was the same with Rishi Sunak's pledge last year to raise UK defence spending to 2.5 per cent. The move was immediately compromised by the qualification that such an increase would only be possible "as soon as the economic conditions allow". Starmer's policy of

over-promising and under-delivering on defence spending is very much in this dishonourable tradition.

But the Prime Minister's difficulty is compounded by the fact that the global-threat environment is becoming more dangerous by the day. So his hollow pledges will come under far greater scrutiny than those made by his predecessors.

This is particularly the case where the UK's Nato allies are concerned. Nato Secretary-General Mark Rutte has already fired the first shot, over Starmer's ambivalence about when the money will be made available to fund his rearmament programme. Rutte warns that Nato will require the UK to spend 3.5 percent of GDP on defence as part of his plan to "equalise" European defence spending with the US.

Starmer has indicated his ultimate "ambition" is to raise spending to 3.5 per cent by 2034, but has given no

clear explanation about how to achieve this figure. As one of the main premises of his defence review is that the UK should focus on being a "Nato first" military force, failing to meet Rutte's ambitious target could prove to be deeply embarrassing. Starmer will need to take care that his empty defence pledges do not further inflame the more hawkish members of the Trump administration. They already believe that the Europeans are taking the US for a ride when it comes to defence spending.

Nato's European member states are likely to come under intense American scrutiny at the summit being held in The Hague later this month. If the Trump administration concludes that Starmer's boasts about increasing UK defence spending do not add up, the Prime Minister could find himself in for a very tough ride indeed.

The Telegraph



# How Putin turned against tech and ‘strangled’ Russia’s Silicon dreams

NOT so long ago, Russia was rolling out the red carpet for Western tech giants. Today, President Vladimir Putin is plotting how to “strangle them.” Once welcomed as symbols of innovation and global connectedness, these companies are now being recast as enemies of the state.

“We need to strangle them ... I say this without hesitation,” Putin told business leaders at a Kremlin meeting last week. He was responding to complaints from Iva Technologies CEO Stanislav Iodkovsky, who stated that Russian firms were “losing billions” because foreign companies, such as Zoom and Microsoft, had not completely withdrawn from the market. Putin’s new plan to punish Western tech companies still operating in Russia is rich with irony. These are the same firms the Kremlin eagerly courted over the past two decades, inviting them to forums, opening sleek offices and touting their presence as proof that Russia was open for business.

Since 2022, software giant Microsoft has steadily withdrawn from Russia, halting license renewals and limiting access to its cloud services. The video conferencing platform Zoom imposed some curbs earlier, blocking companies with state-owned assets in 2021. But it was still fined in 2023 for failing to open a local office in Russia, highlighting the Kremlin’s growing pressure on Western tech firms still operating in the country. This strategy is not just hypocritical; it is self-defeating. Russia has already done an impressive job of throttling its own IT sector. Decades of corruption, paranoia and kleptocracy have driven out much of the country’s world-class tech talent. The very people capable of building the next great Russian tech company now live in exile,

from Dubai to Berlin to Yerevan.

I have met scores of these exiled Russian tech specialists since the war began. Not one plans to return, no matter what the Kremlin promises. Subsidized mortgages, draft exemptions, relocation perks — all of it rings hollow when trust has been shattered. Take Arkady Volozh, co-founder of Yandex and one of the brightest stars of Russian tech, who publicly denounced the war and renounced his Russian citizenship. Now based in Israel, he is investing vast sums of capital into artificial intelligence, self-driving vehicles and delivery robots, far from the country that once celebrated him.

Or consider Nikolai Storonsky, creator of the U.K.-based fintech app Revolut, now a global success story — but not in Russia. Storonsky also renounced his Russian citizenship. VKontakte, once dubbed Russia’s answer to Facebook, was effectively taken over by the state in 2014 when its founder, Pavel Durov, was forced out to clear the way for Kremlin-linked oligarchs. Durov, who later launched the encrypted messaging giant Telegram, fled the country and candidly declared Russia “incompatible with internet business.”

These entrepreneurs weren’t driven away by sanctions or foreign interference. They fled because they knew their intellectual property was safer abroad than in the hands of a regime that sees every server as a potential spy tool. Their departures underscore the bleak future of Russian tech when even its top minds walk away, so does its innovation. The deeper tragedy is that Russia has done a remarkable job of strangling and suffocating its own tech talent. It has produced some of the world’s best engineers,

innovators and coders, only to drive them away with broken promises, fear and government control. What remains is a hollowed-out industry where talent is expendable and progress is sacrificed for paranoia.

It was not supposed to be this way. Back in the days of Dmitry Medvedev’s presidency, there was real talk of turning Russia into a major tech hub. In 2010, Medvedev visited Silicon Valley, toured Apple, Google and Cisco, met Steve Jobs, and opened a Twitter account in the hope of igniting a tech boom back home. Skolkovo was launched as a Russian Silicon Valley, meant to rival Palo Alto. I visited the campus on several occasions, including for a 2014 startup showcase intended to attract much-needed venture capital.

The scene was underwhelming. The sole exhibitor, Kirill Aksenov, was cheerfully demonstrating a voice-controlled robot made not in Russia, but in France. His company, Teledroids, sold the Nao robot for education and research, along with imported vacuum bots. It felt less like a tech incubator and more like a glossy showroom. Far from transforming Moscow into a new free-wheeling, matcha-sipping California, the Potemkin-like Skolkovo was dogged by corruption and inefficiency, leading to battles with the police and tax inspectors. As a result, many of its mentors and startups chose to emigrate.

Now the Kremlin is pivoting from wooing Western firms to bullying them. At the same time, it trots out laughable alternatives like Yotaphone, the state-backed smartphone once hyped by Medvedev as having “Apple worried,” but embraced by no one. Meanwhile, top officials like Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov are still pho-

tographed brazenly using iPhones and Apple Watches, despite official bans. It is a double act: stage-managed sovereignty for public consumption, while behind the scenes, they rely on the very Western gadgets they claim to reject.

After the invasion of Ukraine, Moscow moved quickly to tighten its grip on the information space by blocking major Western platforms like Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. In their place, the Kremlin promoted domestic substitutes such as RuStore for apps, Yappy for TikTok, Rossgam for Instagram and RuTube for YouTube. Most have struggled to attract users and failed to match the popularity of the originals. But the damage goes deeper. By attacking the very companies that keep basic IT infrastructure running — email servers, video calls, cloud storage — the Kremlin is not building resilience. It is isolating itself further from the global economy and undermining what remains of its digital future.

Meanwhile, countries like Turkey and the UAE have been snapping up Russian engineers, grateful for the brain drain that Moscow seems determined to accelerate. Putin’s obsession with control is killing Russia’s chances for genuine innovation. He does not want competition. He wants compliance and subservience. But compliance does not write code. It doesn’t build startups. And it certainly doesn’t create the kind of digital economy that can thrive on anything more than state contracts and propaganda platforms. The truth of the matter is that Russia’s biggest threat to its tech sector is not Western sanctions. It is its own leadership. The same regime that once begged Western firms to come in now seems determined to burn the bridges they built one server, one platform, one company at a time.

# Why 70% of Italian Businesses in Russia are still there

Charles Hecker

**THE head of the Italian-Russian Chamber of Commerce dropped a startling statistic into a recent interview. More than three years ago, Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine made it the world’s most sanctioned country and rained down reputational risk on Western companies doing business there. Despite that, 70% of Italian companies active in Russia have stayed.**

In a conversation with the Russian business news website RBC, Vincenzo Trani described the indecision among Italian executives following Russia’s trampling of the Ukrainian border on Feb. 24, 2022. Confusion and more than a bit of panic were widespread among businesspeople of every nationality in the early days of the war — the stampede toward Moscow’s major airports was live testimony to expat sentiment.

That retreat then spread from the executives to their companies. The war on Ukraine triggered a colossal exodus of Western organizations from Russia. Leaving was a particular priority for high-profile, consumer-oriented businesses facing potential boycotts and pro-Ukraine pressure campaigns if they stayed.

When sanctions did not force the issue, the decision to stay or go included a multitude of common and specific criteria. Did anything set Italian companies apart?

Italian companies left Russia for many of the same reasons that drove most organizations toward the exit. Companies with small market share in the country decided it was not worth the epic hassle of doing business there anymore, even if their specific activities were not sanctioned. Rome pulled out Italy’s state-owned enterprises. Still more Italian firms left because their activities in Russia fell directly under sanctions.

Similarly, Italian companies that stayed share certain characteristics. Executive uncertainty made an early — and easier — departure difficult. In August 2022, the Russian government began to force foreign companies through an increasingly punitive and politicized fire sale process. Most companies complained of feeling trapped in Russia.

It is no secret that hundreds, perhaps even over 1,000, international companies remain in Russia. In certain respects, Italian companies stand apart, if not alone, in their decision-making process.

Italian companies in Russia always felt relatively “comfortable” in Russia, Trani told RBC, and never thought they would meet the same post-invasion hostility that companies from other countries felt. In the vast reallocation of assets that followed the start of the war, Putin seized German, Finnish, Danish and

French companies, among others, and never gave them back. The Kremlin seized only one Italian company — Ariston, the heating equipment manufacturer — but ultimately returned it to its parent company. As a result, Trani said, Italian companies “were relatively less afraid than companies from Germany, Denmark, the USA...” The Ariston episode, reportedly the outcome of intense lobbying, gave Italian companies reason to be hopeful.

Trani also touched on one of the more important drivers of any company’s decision to do business in Russia: its appetite for risk. “Italian companies are actually more prepared for complex situations, where the rules of the game are less understood,” he said. Trani likened Italian companies to their Russian counterparts for their ability to adapt, but took the concept a step further. Italian companies, he said, were eager to see where things would lead post-invasion. “Maybe something interesting would come of this. That’s why a lot of companies stayed,” he told RBC. A company’s risk appetite is a defining driver of its global footprint. In some cases, risk appetite is linked to sector: energy companies, for example, need cast-iron stomachs. In other cases, it stems from regulation — or the lack thereof — in a company’s home jurisdiction.

Organizations afraid of their justice ministries or stock exchanges tread extra carefully in countries like Russia.

Trani seemed to suggest that a company’s nationality also played a role. The interview with RBC includes lingering, even nostalgic, references to a type of Italian exceptionalism in Russia and the historical ties between the two countries. Trani sounds proud recounting that the Italian-Russian Chamber of Commerce traces its origins to 1965, the year before Fiat’s landmark investment in the Soviet automotive industry. Even the late Silvio Berlusconi — legendary pal of Russian President Vladimir Putin — gets a name check.

Italy’s UniCredit bank remains in Russia, opting to shrink and stay rather than sell at a loss. Reuters reported on May 28 that the bank had been approached by a group of Emirati companies interested in buying what remains of UniCredit in Russia, but at a deeply discounted offer. The Italian Central Bank is also making a larger financial services industry transaction at home, conditional on UniCredit’s exit from Russia. According to the Leave Russia website maintained by the Kyiv School of Economics, Italy’s Intesa Sanpaolo bank has Kremlin permission to leave the country. But it still remains today.

From a strictly commercial perspective, it remains difficult to say who looks smart right now: the companies that left or the ones that stayed. Italian companies that left Russia have been able to count their losses, lick their wounds, and move on. Satisfied and profitable as the remaining Italian companies in Russia may be, Trani makes working in Russia sound a bit like life in a constant state of triage. European companies, he said, are behaving pragmatically, not politically: “They’ve invested in Russia and can’t leave at a loss.” Earlier this year, the companies that stayed in Russia were beginning to look like the smart ones. US President Donald Trump and Putin started talking on the phone, and Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov met twice in Riyadh. Relations between Moscow and Washington seemed on a course toward normalization; companies in the US started calling their lawyers, bankers and PR consultants to lay plans for market re-entry. Trani said European companies have also been wondering how, when, and in what configuration EU sanctions relief might come.

That optimism, for now, is ill-founded. Trump thirsts for better relations with Putin and Putin says he wants to work on his relations with Trump. For now, though, he prefers to continue crushing Ukraine. Geopolitics is pushing an East-West commercial rapprochement into a more distant future. Companies are also beginning to realize that an end to the war is not an end to their problems. As the conflict drags on, Putin is making the terms and conditions for returning to Russia almost as punitive as the exit process. Still, Trani said interest in returning to Russia among Italian companies is high.

Finally, there is the question of Trani’s own presence in Russia.

Trani has lived and worked in the country for 25 years. He studied at the St. Petersburg Institute of Foreign Economic Relations and worked at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. He is the founder of Russia’s largest car-sharing business and is in his second (non-secutive) term as the president of the chamber. He is not leaving Russia, at least until the geopolitical situation stabilizes and he can anticipate a better valuation on his business. Until then, he is staying put. “I always say, I’m not an Italian, I’m a Neapolitan,” Trani said, noting that Sophia Loren used to say the same. “Naples is not your average city. We live next to a volcano and have gotten used to it. We take certain risks in life and understand that sometimes, they’re unavoidable.”

# Why is Bashkortostan getting a Ukrainian cultural center?

RADIY Khabirov, the head of Russia’s republic of Bashkortostan, knows how to cause a scene. In his nearly seven-year tenure, the Kremlin-aligned politician has made countless public moves to reinforce his carefully crafted persona as an unbreakable alpha male. He frequently reprimands his subordinates in public using a tone better suited for the gang drama “Slovo Patsana” and doesn’t shy away from verbal attacks on prominent community elders.

In other words, Khabirov has done plenty to shock the public, whether by defying cultural etiquette or by exhibiting unparalleled cruelty to his own people (it was he who oversaw unprecedented repressions in the aftermath of the Baymak protests). But his latest move must have caught even his most seasoned observers by surprise.

At a routine government meeting on Monday, Khabirov ordered Bashkortostan’s Culture Minister Amina Shafikova to oversee construction of a Ukrainian cultural center in Bashkortostan — a move, which, he said, was inspired by his trip to the Ukrainian village of Zolotonoshka in southwestern Bashkortostan. “There are quite a lot of Ukrainians living here on our [land]... This will be our way of showing that we respect them for preserving their culture,” Khabirov told Shafikova.

The Ukrainian diaspora in Russia has traditionally been among the largest in the world, with as many as 2.9 million Russian residents identifying as Ukrainian in the 2002 census. However, this fell to 1.9 million in 2010 and to just 800,000 in 2020, the most recent available data.

Leyla Latypova

Bashkortostan’s Ukrainian diaspora amounts to slightly more than 14,800 people, according to the latest census. In the village of Zolotonoshka, Ukrainians comprise the majority of its 420 residents, making it one of the few majority-Ukrainian enclaves in the republic and in Russia overall.

Russia’s vast Ukrainian community has been living under pressure for decades. As relations between Russia and Ukraine worsened, the more difficult and dangerous it became for Ukrainians in Russia to display their ethnic identity. This pressure has increased exponentially since the Kremlin sent tanks across the border with Ukraine in 2022, a move that prompted many Ukrainians in Russia to flee the country in defiance of the war, growing surveillance and increasingly unbearable demands to assimilate.

(You can read a more detailed account and analysis of the varying experiences of ethnic Ukrainians in Russia amid the war in this feature I co-authored back in 2023.) “My father was forced to flee Russia precisely because he was persecuted by the FSB for being Ukrainian,” said Marika Semenenko, a Moscow-born Ukrainian entrepreneur and expert in nationalism studies.

Marika’s father, Valery Semenenko, is a prominent figure in Russia’s Ukrainian diaspora, having headed two Ukrainian cultural institutions that were shut down by the Kremlin. “People’s attitude toward him changed together with the propaganda narratives: at first, he was a ‘Banderite.’ With the full-scale invasion, he became a ‘fascist,’”

Marika told me.

Given Marika’s background and expertise on ethnic and Indigenous activism in Russia, I was curious to hear her interpretation of Khabirov’s move. It turns out, she was just as puzzled as I am. “Indigenous activists in the republics are vilified as separatists, terrorists and extremists. All of those labels are also used against ethnic Ukrainians in Russia today,” Marika noted.

“So, knowing how the head of Bashkortostan treats Bashkir activists, this all seems paradoxical. I don’t understand the nature of it right now, but it looks as if the head of Bashkortostan has somehow decided to make a statement against Moscow,” she told me. Marika noted that Bashkortostan’s neighbor, Tatarstan, also recently greenlit a literary competition in honor of Ukrainian national poet Taras Shevchenko, in clear contrast with the Kremlin’s official policy of suppressing Ukraine’s national identity.

“It’s clear that the authorities in these republics are completely loyal to Moscow — for now. But the discourse, the attitude, the dynamics can shift very easily. Because even now, while Moscow is persecuting and destroying ethnic Ukrainians, the attitude can be different in the republics,” Marika told me. “‘Hope’ is a strong word, but maybe this paradox shows that things aren’t so black and white,” she concluded.

As we spoke, I floated my own explanation of the events. Unlike Tatarstan’s Rustam Minnikhanov, Radiy Khabirov is the Kremlin’s man through and through; hence, he most definitely sees Ukrainians in Bashkortostan as a threat to

national security and stability. Establishing a Ukrainian cultural center would allow Khabirov to check two boxes at once. His Ukrainian constituents will feel appreciated and represented, and his republic’s authorities will be able to closely regulate Ukrainian cultural activities — all while facilitating FSB surveillance of the community.

In other words, Khabirov is determined to ensure that residents of Zolotonoshka are “the right Ukrainians” in the eyes of the Russian regime. Marika reminded me that this division between “the right Ukrainians” loyal to the government and “the wrong Ukrainians” who express their political vision for an independent homeland has roots in the Soviet era. And these same divisions and patterns apply to virtually any other ethnic group colonized by Russia.

“Now, amid the full-scale war, it feels like that old policy of dividing Ukrainians into ‘good’ and ‘bad’ doesn’t exist anymore. The current Russian policy is: destroy all Ukrainians or turn them into Russians — basically declaring that Ukrainians don’t exist as such, that they are just the ‘wrong kind of Russians’ who need to be corrected,” said Marika. “The government now is so totalitarian that it’s easier for them to arrest, ban and imprison a few activists and force the rest into silence. That’s what they’re doing with Ukrainians — and not just Ukrainians, but with Indigenous activists too,” she continued. “That’s why [Khabirov’s] initiative seems like a prank to me.” A prank, a statement, or a well-thought-out policy? Only time will tell what exactly Radiy Khabirov has in mind.

# Voices of resistance

Fatma Zehra Solmaz

ISRAEL’S ongoing assault on the Gaza Strip has come to be known as “the world’s first livestreamed genocide,” a chilling description used by many seeking justice for Palestinians - from lawyers at the International Court of Justice to the most prominent of human rights activists and organizations.

For nearly 18 months, visuals of Israel’s relentless strikes and their horrific human costs have been reaching millions, playing a vital role in fueling the public outrage being witnessed in all parts of the globe. That has only been possible because of the journalists in Gaza placing their lives on the line to get the truth out to the world, with many paying the ultimate price as they were targeted and killed in Israeli attacks.

Plestia Alaqad ranks among the fortunate few who managed to survive Israel’s genocidal war, continuing her fight for justice and making sure that the world cannot feign ignorance about the suffering inflicted on Palestinians. “I don’t want us Palestinians to be both killed and silenced. That’s why I feel like it’s a duty and a mission to be a journalist more than a profession,” says 23-year-old Alaqad, whose fearless reporting from Gaza has earned her global recognition and several honors.

During the early days of Israel’s

offensive, Alaqad - a journalism graduate - recorded a video of intense bombing that went viral and, as she continued sharing daily updates, her Instagram following surged from a few thousand to over 4 million. She has used her reach and platform to reveal the reality facing Palestinians in Gaza, particularly aware of how Israel has been intentionally targeting and killing Gaza’s journalists.

“Israel is trying to silence the truth. International journalists aren’t even allowed in Gaza, so the only people who can report about what’s happening are local journalists, and they’re getting killed,” she told Anadolu at a recent event in the Turkish metropolis Istanbul. “So, whenever you see what’s happening in Gaza and you think it’s terrible and devastating and frustrating, just think about how much there is happening that you don’t even see ... because there isn’t anyone to report it.” Alaqad’s courageous work has brought global attention to Israel’s oppression of Palestinians and earned her several prestigious honors, including a spot on BBC’s list of 100 most influential women of 2024, the One Young World Journalist of the Year, the Lyra McKee Award for Bravery, and a Human Rights Defender Award.

Her debut book, The Eyes of Gaza, was also released this year, chronicling her experiences and the horrors of Israel’s devastating war on Gaza, which has killed nearly 54,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children. “Whenever I get the chance, I talk about Gaza, I talk about what’s happening, and I raise awareness,” she said. “Because if you think about it, if anyone else anywhere in the world was getting killed and slaughtered and facing a genocide, they would want other people to talk about them.”

Egyptian journalist and activist Rahma Zein has been another crucial figure in raising awareness about the plight of Palestinians, with particular focus on confronting Western mainstream media’s failures. “It is very important for people to speak up. We’re seeing media all over not covering the truth,” Zein said in a conversation with Anadolu. “We see that journalists are not allowed into Gaza, and therefore, there’s no proper reporting, and the reporters that are on ground are being targeted and killed.”

Zein first gained global attention with her powerful exchange with a CNN reporter at the Rafah crossing in October 2023, where she expressed her anger at the biased coverage by Western media

outlets, saying: “I understand that you’re a news channel, you have your foreign policy, but where is your humanity?” The Egyptian journalist emphasized the importance of continued efforts to challenge skewed narratives: “If it wasn’t for the journalists on the ground, we wouldn’t know what’s happening in Palestine, or we’d have a very skewed look as to what’s happening.” She cited examples of “absolutely farcical” headlines that go against the fundamental principles of journalism.

“We’re seeing journalists put more effort into creating headlines that are absolutely farcical, like, for example, saying ‘Palestinians starved; who’s starving them?’” she said. “Your basics of journalism are to note the perpetrator.” Zein strongly criticized influential figures who have remained silent over Israel’s unchecked violence against Palestinians, urging people to exercise their own power to raise awareness and advocate for accountability.

“We put on a pedestal influencers, politicians, thought leaders, who were really taking away from the truth of the matter, and who ... are showing no backbone because they’re not speaking up,” she said. “It’s scary, (but) instead of me moping about it, I can do something about it. It is important to take that initiative.”

# Bulgaria shows even citizens of small nations reject the euro

Samuel Ramani

**BULGARIA is slated to be the newest member of the Eurozone. The European Commission and European Central Bank (ECB) released statements today that effectively confirmed Bulgaria’s adoption of the euro on January 1 2026. Bulgaria’s entry extends the currency bloc from 20 to 21 members and builds on the nation’s 2007 decision to abandon the lev as its official currency; the year it joined the EU.**

Bulgaria’s adoption of the euro reflects its ability to overcome problematic economic indicators. Bulgaria was initially expected to become a Eurozone member in 2024, but its 9.5 per cent inflation rate scuppered these aspirations. Bulgaria’s harmonisation with ECB policies is expected to lower its inflation rate to 1.8 per cent by 2026 and ensure its alignment with the EU’s price stability criteria. Bulgaria’s debt-to-GDP ratio has declined since 1998 and stands at just 24.1 per cent.

While Bulgaria’s ability to transcend demographic

decline and political dysfunction to meet the EU’s criteria appears inspiring, there is a darker side to the story. Bulgaria’s adoption of the euro overrules public opinion and underscores the sovereignty concerns that the EU’s smaller member states have about the bloc’s supranational authority.

Despite projections of a 5.8 per cent increase in Bulgaria’s exports after it joins the euro, opposition to the common currency is fierce. A recent Eurobarometer survey revealed that 50 per cent of Bulgarians reject the euro and only 43 per cent are in favour of it. Bulgarian pensioners fear that pricing goods in euros will erode their life savings and their younger counterparts share their concerns about a loss of independence.

Incoming Polish president Karol Nawrocki’s sovereignty-based opposition to swapping the zloty for the euro resonates strongly in Bulgaria. The disconnect between elite decision-making and public opinion

on the euro has threatened political cohesion by galvanising pro-Russian populist movements. Varazhdane Party leader Kostadin Kostadinov, who recently signed a cooperation agreement with president Vladimir Putin’s United Russia Party, has capitalised on anti-euro sentiments and rallied thousands of like-minded Bulgarians on the streets of Sofia.

As Bulgaria has had seven parliamentary elections since 2021 and lacks the ability to form a durably stable government, this dispute has serious destabilising potential. The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the potential for anti-vaccination disinformation to spread widely in Bulgaria and the euro’s adoption over the public’s would further erode trust.

While EU officials celebrate Bulgaria’s milestone acceptance of a common currency, the mood in Sofia is much more sombre and apprehensive. This is yet another reminder of the growing discontent between Brussels and the European street.





# Slow US job growth anticipated in May

Unemployment rate seen steady

WASHINGTON (Reuters): U.S. job growth likely slowed considerably in May as businesses struggled with headwinds from tariff uncertainty, but probably not enough for a cautious Federal Reserve to resume cutting interest rates anytime soon.

The Labor Department's closely watched employment report on Friday is also expected to show the unemployment rate holding steady at 4.2% for the third straight month and solid wage growth, which should keep the economy afloat for now.

Nonetheless, the economy's prospects are dimming and economists say President Donald Trump's flip-flopping on tariffs has hampered businesses' ability to plan ahead.

They expected May to mark the start of slower job gains. Opposition to Trump's tax-cut and spending bill from hardline conservative Republicans in the U.S. Senate and billionaire Elon Musk added another layer of uncertainty for businesses.

"The economy is caught in a rising temperature pressure cooker situation," said Brian Bethune, an economics professor at Boston College. "Tariff policies are changing daily, planning in that environment is clearly not conducive to any hiring."

Nonfarm payrolls likely increased by 130,000 jobs last month after rising 177,000 in April, a Reuters survey of economists showed. That would be below the three-month

average of 155,000, but above the roughly 100,000 jobs per month that economists say are needed to keep up with growth in the working age population.

Estimates ranged from 75,000-190,000 jobs added. Much of the job growth this year reflects worker hoarding by businesses.

"Businesses have learned the lesson of past recessions that if they are overly proactive in laying off staff or pulling back on investment into economic softness, it can be hard to get those people back or to resume investment when the economy recovers," said Andrew Husby, a senior economist at BNP Paribas Securities. "That dynamic remains in full effect, and we see a low-hiring, low-layoff environment continuing this spring."

Economists believe this state of affairs could keep the U.S. central bank on the sidelines until the end of the year. Financial markets expect the Fed will keep its benchmark overnight interest rate unchanged in the 4.25%-4.50% range later this month, before resuming policy easing in September.

"Yet, with both large and small businesses indicating that they plan to hold onto their workers and ride out the tariff storm, only a modest weakening in the jobs market is likely, further reducing the urgency for Fed support," said Seema Shah, chief global strategist at

Principal Asset Management. "We expect the Fed to wait until the fourth quarter before it reduces policy rates."

The anticipated moderation in job growth last month would be payback after front-loading of imported goods boosted payrolls in the transportation and warehousing industries in April.

More jobs were likely created in the healthcare sector, but a sharp reduction in tourist travel because of trade tensions and Trump's often expressed desire to make Canada the 51st of the United States and acquire Greenland, could hamper leisure and hospitality employment.

Manufacturing payrolls probably remained weak as factories grappled with duties on raw materials, including motor vehicle parts. Construction employment could soon come under pressure from 50% tariffs on steel and aluminum.

May was probably another month of moderate federal government job losses. While mass layoffs of public workers have grabbed headlines, a federal judge has blocked the firings.

Reinstated workers who have been put on paid leave are counted as employed.

The same applies to those who have accepted buyout offers.

With the White House revoking the temporary legal status of hundreds of thousands of immigrants,

fewer than 100,000 jobs per month would likely be needed to keep the jobless rate stable. The shrinking labor pool could push down the unemployment rate and boost wage growth, economists say.

Average hourly earnings are forecast to have increased 0.3% after gaining 0.2% in April. In the 12 months through May, wages are estimated to have risen 3.7% after advancing 3.8% in April, more than sufficient to support consumer spending.

There has so far been a limited impact on the labor market from the immigration crackdown. Goldman Sachs economist Elsie Peng said their estimate of recent immigrants' labor force participation rate since December 2024 had increased to 67% from 65%, with their unemployment rate declining to 7% from 10%.

"However, the response rate of recent immigrants to the household survey has also declined somewhat over this period, raising concerns that the survey may have missed many unauthorized immigrants who are scared to go to work amid the intense immigration crackdown," said Peng.

"Even under the extreme assumption that this decline fully reflects withdrawal of these immigrants from the labor force, we estimate that these trends would together imply only a modest hit, -4%, to employment of recent immigrants."



LAHORE: Vendor feeding the sacrificial animal camel while waiting the customers for selling at Animal Market Shahpur Kanjra in connection with Eidul Azha.

## Chairman APDA KP, PakWheels CEO discuss collaboration

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Ghulam Bilal Javid, Chairman of the All Pakistan Car Dealers & Importers Association (APDA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, has formally engaged with PakWheels CEO Sunil Munj to discuss opportunities for collaboration and address key challenges faced by car dealers across Pakistan.

A delegation from PakWheels, on the instruc-

tions of Mr. Munj, traveled from Islamabad to Peshawar to meet with Mr. Javid. During the meeting, Ghulam Bilal Javid emphasized that PakWheels is a leading automotive platform not only in Pakistan but internationally, with no parallel in the domain of vehicle buying and selling.

He conveyed the pressing concerns of car dealers, particularly the high cost of vehicle inspection when purchasing from other cities. Mr. Javid urged

PakWheels to reconsider their pricing structure and offer special corporate rates for registered dealers.

The PakWheels team responded positively and shared preliminary offers. Mr. Javid assured that, "Insha'Allah, we will soon bring good news for our car dealers."

Furthermore, he announced that the APDA leadership-comprising Group Leader Mian Shoaib, Chairman All Pakistan Sardar Irfan, Raja

Amir Karim, Haji Tariq Mehmood, Malik Qaiser, Hassan Taimoor, Haji Furman, Nisar Babar, Haji Ihsan, Ghulam Hussain Chand, and Hashar Zarif-will be meeting with Sunil Munj soon to further solidify this partnership.

Ghulam Bilal Javid reaffirmed APDA's commitment to promoting Pakistani brands and enhancing cooperation for the betterment of the car dealing community nationwide.

## Switzerland hits UBS with \$26 billion added capital requirement

BERN (Reuters): The Swiss government on Friday proposed stricter rules for UBS (UBSGS), opens new tab following its takeover of Credit Suisse, which could make it hold \$26 billion more in core capital, confirming some of the bank's worst fears about incoming new regulations.

The key proposal, which the bank would have six to eight years to prepare for after it became law, is that UBS must fully capitalise its foreign units, confirming what many analysts, law-makers and executives had been expecting.

UBS shares, which have lagged European peers amid uncertainty about the new rules, jumped after the proposals were made public on Friday afternoon, rising by more than 6% and on track for their best day since May 2024.

The government said its capital requirement proposal would allow UBS to reduce its holding of Additional Tier 1 (AT1) bonds by \$8 billion. Today, UBS must only 60% capitalise its foreign units and can cover some of the capital with AT1 debt.

UBS executives say the additional capital burden will put the Zurich-based bank at a disadvantage to rivals and undermine the competitiveness of Switzerland as a financial centre.

Such was the shock in Switzerland over the 2023

collapse of Credit Suisse that top politicians led by Finance Minister Karin Keller-Sutter vowed to introduce more robust rules that would protect taxpayers and prevent another meltdown in future.

Keller-Sutter now holds Switzerland's rotating one-year presidency and Friday's announcement will start a long period of political wrangling over the measures, which the governing federal council called "targeted and proportionate."

"They strengthen trust in the financial centre, which, in the view of the federal council, is central to its stability and competitiveness," the council said in a statement.

A parliamentary inquiry last year noted that since UBS bought Credit Suisse for 3 billion Swiss francs (\$3.65 billion) in March 2023, it has had a balance sheet bigger than the Swiss economy, and urged the government to take the foreign units into account.

The federal council said it would present drafts on the proposals for consultations with stakeholders in the second half of 2025. Finance Ministry officials say laws requiring parliamentary approval will not enter force before 2028.

Separate measures known as ordinances that can be issued directly by the government could apply from the start of 2027.

A six to eight-year transition period looked appropriate for UBS to meet new rules on capitalising foreign units from when they come into force, the government said.

That could give the bank until the mid-2030s to comply.

Under the Swiss proposals, UBS's Common Equity Tier 1 (CET1) capital ratio could end up somewhat higher than those of global rivals, the government said. UBS's CET1 ratio of 14.3% could rise up to 17%, above rivals like JPMorgan (JPM.N), opens new tab at 15.8%, Morgan Stanley (MS.N), opens new tab at 15.7%, and 15.3% at Goldman Sachs, it said.

Shares in UBS rose more than 60% in the 12 months following its acquisition of Credit Suisse.

But the stock has since sharply underperformed; UBS shares have lost about 5% in the past year, while a top European banking index (.SX7P), opens new tab climbed 37%.

Analysts say the new regulations could trigger a rejig of UBS's business model, which now focuses on growth in the United States and Asia. To take the edge off the rules, the bank may be tempted to sell some assets, banking experts say.

The Swiss government also set out piecemeal reforms to bolster the market regulator FINMA, which was heavily criticised for its response to the Credit Suisse collapse.

These include measures aimed at holding bankers to account, giving the regulator the power to impose fines and making it easier to restrain pay and claw back bonuses. Still, the proposals come years after the European Union introduced similar measures in the wake of the 2007-2009 financial crisis.

The government also proposed making it easier for banks to access liquidity from the Swiss National Bank. Barriers to transferring collateral to the SNB will also be removed.



## Solar irrigation can protect water, support KP farmers

PESHAWAR (APP): As climate change, high energy costs, and water shortage continue to affect farmers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), experts have called for using solar-powered irrigation systems (SPIS) to help solve these problems.

Solar irrigation uses sunlight instead of fuel to pump water, making it cheaper, environment-friendly, and better for long-term use.

A meeting was held in Peshawar where experts, government officials, farmers, and private companies came together to discuss how solar irrigation can improve farming in KP.

The workshop was organised by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) as part of its work on climate-friendly water solutions in Pakistan. The programme is supported by the UK government and CGIAR's Climate Action Science Program.

Dr Mohsin Hafeez, Director at IWMI, said that most of Pakistan's water is used in farming, but much of it is wasted due to poor methods. He explained that around half of the water

farmers use comes from underground, and this underground water is running low because it is being used faster than it is being refilled. He said solar irrigation systems can help reduce pressure on underground water and also cut fuel costs for farmers.

"Solar irrigation is not just about technology. It helps farmers save money and prepares them to face climate problems," said Dr Mohsin. He added that IWMI is working with the KP government to expand solar irrigation in a fair and smart way.

Two digital tools were introduced at the event — the Solar Suitability Mapping (SSM) and the Solar Irrigation Pump Sizing Tool (SIP-ST). These tools will help decide where solar pumps can be used best and what size of pump is needed for each farm.

Engr. Kalsoom Rehman from the Agriculture Engineering Department said that although solar pumps cost more in the beginning, they last longer and don't need much maintenance. She said farmers need proper guidance when setting up these

pumps to avoid overuse of groundwater. She also said solar pumps are already becoming popular in KP, especially in areas that don't get canal water.

Muhammad Amjad Shamsher, a senior official from the Public Health Engineering Department, warned that Pakistan's per-person water availability has dropped from 5,200 cubic metres in 1950 to only 850 in 2020.

He said water security is closely linked to food security, and Pakistan is close to becoming a water-scarce country. He also shared that 2,000 solar-powered tube wells have already been installed in different parts of the province. However, he stressed the need for better monitoring of under-

ground water.

In group discussions, participants talked about ways to plan better and work together across different departments.

They said clear data, proper training, and strong partnerships with private companies are needed. They also discussed the importance of improving repair and maintenance services for solar systems.

The workshop ended with a shared commitment to promote solar irrigation as a key part of sustainable agriculture in KP. The participants agreed that switching to solar power would protect underground water, help farmers earn better, and make KP more prepared for climate challenges.



## Tesla's \$380 billion wipeout marks biggest 2025 loss among top companies

NEW YORK (Reuters): Tesla is the worst-performing large-cap stock this year, thanks to declining electric vehicle demand, Chief Executive Elon Musk's political controversies over his ties to far-right groups, and now, his public feud with President Donald Trump.

Tesla shares slumped on Thursday, after Trump on social media threatened to cut off government contracts with Elon Musk's companies, following Musk's sharp criticism of the president's signature tax and spending bill on his X social media platform.

The market capitalization of Tesla Inc (TSLA.O), opens new tab has fallen 29.3% to \$917 billion so far this year, the biggest drop among big companies in the world.

Tesla, which ranked eighth globally in market capitalization at the beginning of the year, slipped to

tenth as of June 5.

The company's shares rose in early trading on Friday, as investors took some comfort from White House aides scheduling a call with Musk to broker peace after a public feud with Trump.

Apple, which began the year as the world's most valuable company, has slipped to No. 3 this year, dragged down by weak demand in China, Trump's tariff threats, and slower progress in AI. Its market capitalization has declined over 20% this year, falling to \$2.99 trillion as of Thursday.

Meanwhile, Microsoft has claimed the No. 1 spot in market capitalization, driven by surging demand for AI services, including its partnership with OpenAI and the integration of tools like Microsoft 365 Copilot.

**Tesla shares gain as Trump-Musk feud**

**appears to cool**

Tesla shares (TSLA.O), opens new tab fell clawed back from steep losses as a war of words between CEO Elon Musk and U.S. President Donald Trump appeared to cool, easing investor worries about the likely political fallout on the electric automaker.

Shares rose about 5% in early trading. Politico had reported Musk and Trump were expected to speak on Friday, but a White House official told Reuters there were no plans for a call.

Musk signalled on his X social media platform he was open to easing tensions with Trump, agreeing with comments from hedge fund manager Bill Ackman calling for a detente.

The spat between the world's most powerful man and its richest erased more than \$150 billion from Tesla's market value on Thursday, the company's biggest drop in one session.

Short-sellers, or investors betting against the stock, pocketed nearly \$4 billion from the drop, the second-biggest single-day of profit on record, according to data from Ortex.

Tensions escalated after Musk stepped up criticism of Trump's sweeping tax and spending bill, which proposes largely ending the popular \$7,500 EV tax incentive by the end of 2025.

In response, Trump suggested cuts to the government's contracts with Musk's companies, including rocket maker SpaceX.

"It might be a bit too hopeful to think their relationship will ever go back to what it once was, but if cooler heads prevail and the tension eases, that would definitely be a big improvement for Tesla," said Tesla shareholder Matthew Britzman, who is an analyst at Hargreaves

Lansdown.

An open clash with Trump could pose multiple hurdles for Tesla and the rest of Musk's sprawling business empire.

The U.S. Transportation Department regulates vehicle design standards and would have a big say in whether Tesla can mass-produce robotaxis without pedals and steering wheels.

Tesla did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the call.

Tesla stock is down 29.5% this year after a 14% drop on Thursday. Still, the shares trade at 120 times expected earnings, a lofty multiple compared to other automakers and even tech giants such as Nvidia (NVDA.O), opens new tab.

The shares have been on a turbulent ride since last July when Musk backed Trump's White House bid. They surged initially as investors bet on less regulatory pressure for robot-

axis, but tumbled due to soft sales and brand fallout from Musk's political stance.

Some analysts said the rift was likely to blow over

as it would be detrimental to both the president and his biggest backer.

"Those are obviously threats that are unlikely to come into fruition," said

City Index analyst Fiona Cincotta. "I don't expect this to blow out into anything more serious than a war of words for a couple of days."







In brief

Starc comfortable with IPL pullout

MELBOURNE (Agencies): Australian fast bowler Mitchell Starc is comfortable with his decision to leave the Indian Premier League (IPL) following the India-Pakistan clashes last month regardless of any repercussions, the 35-year-old said. The IPL was suspended on May 9 in the wake of hostilities between the two. It resumed on May 17 after the nuclear-armed neighbours agreed to a ceasefire. While most IPL foreign recruits returned to complete their franchise commitment, the Delhi Capitals duo of Starc and fellow Australian Jake Fraser-McGurk took no further part in the 10-team league. "I'm comfortable with my decision and how I felt about the whole situation and how it was handled," Starc told the Sydney Morning Herald on Friday. "Time will tell with repercussions or how it looks with guys that didn't return. But I've had my questions and concerns leading into that game, and obviously we saw what happened, which played a part in my decision." Starc was in Dharamsala, near the Pakistan border, for Delhi's May 9 match against the Punjab Kings. The contest was abandoned midway through, although league organisers blamed it on a flood-lights failure. "Jake and I chose not to (return). So it was a very individual decision, and I'm happy to live with whatever comes of that," Starc said. He opted out of the Champions Trophy in Pakistan earlier this year citing personal reasons and has skipped the IPL more than once to preserve himself for international cricket. The left-arm quick said he withdrew from the remainder of the IPL because of the extraordinary circumstances.

China fans react to WC exit

SHANGHAI (AFP): Fed-up Chinese football fans and pundits expressed dismay Friday after the country's World Cup dreams were torpedoed following a crushing qualifying defeat in Indonesia. President Xi Jinping has said he wanted China to win the World Cup one day but the latest flop means they have only ever played there once, in 2002, when they failed to get a point or score a goal. The 1-0 defeat in Jakarta on Thursday left them rooted to the foot of Asian qualifying Group C with seven losses in nine games. They have conceded 20 goals. Football commentator Zhan Jun said Branko Ivankovic's men lost "due to lack of experience, lack of ability and poor handling of details". The Croatian coach's tactics were "not suitable for the team" and put too much pressure on defensive midfielder Wang Shangyuan. Zhan wrote on the Weibo social media site. Veteran pundit Ji Yuyang complained that Ivankovic's leadership had let the team down and that the coach was "not as good as several of his predecessors". "In their group the Chinese team lost the most games and conceded the most goals," Ji noted on Weibo. China's long-suffering fans vented online. One said that "these national players simply don't realise that the point of football is to kick the ball into the opponents' goal". "They only know how to stupidly chase the ball!" The national team has long been the butt of jokes and a target of derision in China both for its poor record and corruption in the sport. "The last time the national team made it to the World Cup, I was in year six of primary school," wrote another online.

PCB, Sindh govt to jointly upgrade Niaz Stadium

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) and the Sindh government will join hands to undertake the upgradation of Niaz Stadium, Hyderabad, as per international standards. It was decided during a meeting between Chairman PCB Mohsin Naqvi and Chief Minister Sindh Murad Ali Shah at the former's office in Islamabad.

Promotion of cricket, holding of international matches and restoration of different stadia in Sindh came under discussion during the meeting. A PCB team will visit Niaz stadium, Hyderabad next week and revisit facilities at the stadium as part of the report to be submitted to the Chairman PCB Mohsin Naqvi. Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah, speaking on the

occasion, said the Sindh government will provide financial assistance to the PCB in the upgradation and renovation work at the Niaz stadium under directions of the President Asif Ali Zardari. Chairman PCB Mohsin Naqvi said the cricket's governing body in the country is working on new cricketing venues in the country, adding that restoration of international

cricket in Hyderabad and Faisalabad is his first priority. He said the Pakistan Cricket Board will make an effort to hold an international match at the Niaz stadium during the current year. The last international ODI match at the stadium was held in 2008. Provincial Minister Jam Khan Shoro and COO PCB Sumair Ahmed Syed were present during the meeting.

Beckham set to be awarded knighthood

LONDON (Agencies): David Beckham is set to be awarded a knighthood in King Charles' Birthday Honours. The former England football captain, 50, was appointed an officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 2003. But BBC Sport has been told he is now in line to receive further recognition for both his football career, and his contributions to British society, with the list of recipients to be published next week. Beckham played 115 times for his country as well as for Manchester United, Real Madrid, LA Galaxy, Paris St-Germain and AC Milan, retiring in 2013. Beckham was reportedly first nominated for a knighthood in 2011. In 2017 several British newspapers printed details of leaked emails in which Beckham allegedly criticised the honours system and the honours committee. A spokesperson for Beckham said at the time that the emails were "hacked", "doctored" and "private".



The former footballer married singer and fashion designer Victoria Beckham in 1999. The couple share four children - Brooklyn, Romeo, Cruz and Harper Seven. Beckham played a key role in securing the London 2012 Olympics, and has been an ambassador for Unicef since 2005. Unicef - which supports vulnerable children around the world - launched 'The David Beckham Unicef Fund' in 2015 to mark a decade's partnership between the two. Beckham became an ambassador for The King's Foundation in 2024, supporting King Charles' education pro-

gramme and efforts to ensure young people have a greater understanding of nature. He is also part-owner of League Two side Salford City, as well as president and co-owner of Major League Soccer team Inter Miami in the United States. He helped set-up the Inter Miami CF Foundation - a community driven not-for-profit enterprise that looks to empower underserved communities, using football as a catalyst. A Government spokesperson said: "We do not comment on speculation on honours." Beckham's representatives declined to comment.

Akeal out of T20I opener after failing to secure UK visa

JAMAICA (Agencies): Akeal Hosein, West Indies' left-arm spinner, has been ruled out of the opening match of the T20I series against England that gets underway in Chester-le-Street on Friday evening - and potentially the entire series - after he and his fellow Trinidadian, Jyd Goolie, were unable to secure the necessary visas to enter the UK.

Both men were denied entry to the country following recent changes to UK visa entry requirements for Trinidad and Tobago citizens, which came into effect on April 23 and May 12, 2025. These changes required both players to submit visa applications and attend mandatory in-person appointments. However, Hosein was unable to meet these requirements after being given permission by Cricket West Indies to remain with Quetta Gladiators until the conclusion of the Pakistan Super League late last month. Goolie, meanwhile, had been named as a late replacement for West Indies' tour of Ireland last month, in the wake of Roston Chase's appointment as Test captain, but was unable to secure a visa waiver at such short notice. Chase had been due to leave for a training camp in Barbados, ahead of the forthcoming home series against Australia, but has instead been retained in the T20I squad for the duration of the England series. Director of Cricket, Miles Bascombe, explained the situation. "As soon as the updated visa requirements were announced, CWI began the necessary application processes," he said. "This was only possible after Akeal returned to Trinidad, and following the confirmation of Jyd's selection to the Ireland squad. "Akeal, who was selected for both the England and Ireland legs of the tour, was granted permission to fulfill his commitments with the extended Pakistan Super League until mid-May. "Jyd was called up for the Ireland series ... however, [he] was unable to secure the required visa waiver, as the transition period for Trinidad and Tobago residents had already expired." CWI confirmed that formal efforts had been made the expedite the process for both players. "These processes are ultimately governed by UK immigration authorities and remain outside of CWI's control. CWI remains optimistic that the matter will be resolved in the coming days, allowing Hosein to join the squad for the remaining matches."

Mike Hesson pushes for multi-skilled, smarter cricket



LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan's newly appointed white-ball head coach Mike Hesson has said modern players need to be multi-skilled—effective in batting, bowling, and especially fielding—to elevate the team's overall performance. In an interview with a leading cricket website, a seasoned international coach with vast experience, Mike Hesson, has reassured Babar Azam and Shaheen Shah Afridi that they remain in the team's plans, with no format ruled out for either player. According to details, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) arranged a training session for national players in Lahore, where meetings with the new coaching staff also took place. Sources revealed that head coach Mike Hesson

assured Babar Azam that he remains a part of the team's plans and that no format has been closed to him. He emphasized that Babar would be given opportunities as needed. Hesson also sought Babar's input on how to improve team performance and asked which format he enjoys playing the most. Similarly, Hesson had a separate conversation with Shaheen Shah Afridi, during which both the star batter and the pacer made it clear they are available for red-and white-ball cricket alike. He emphasized the end of the era where cricketers could survive solely as specialists. "The concept of specialist batters is now outdated," he stated. Referring to Pakistan's recent T20I series against Bangladesh, Hesson high-

lighted a major tactical shift: "In every match, Pakistan used seven to eight bowling options. It's part of a new strategy that ensures captains have the flexibility to make better decisions depending on match situations." He also underscored the vital role of fielding in white-ball cricket, saying, "You can't hide anyone in the field anymore. Fielding is now absolutely crucial." The head coach revealed he planned to maintain direct communication with players and would clearly convey the expectations for national selection. "I've accepted this coaching role with open eyes. The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) understands that a shift in white-ball strategy is necessary," he noted. Challenging the perception that aggressive play always brings results, Hesson advocated for a smarter approach: "Success comes from intelligent and calculated cricket, not just aggression." He expressed concern that some talented players are not performing to their full potential. "We need to guide those players. Immediate results may not come; there will be ups and downs, but we must stay focused on the ultimate goal."

Sinner to face Djokovic as Alcaraz eyes French Open Final



PARIS (AFP): World number one Jannik Sinner locks horns with 24-time Grand Slam champion Novak Djokovic in the French Open semi-finals Friday, as Carlos Alcaraz tries to keep his title defence on track against Lorenzo Musetti. Sinner has stormed into the last four without dropping a set while Djokovic impressed in a four-set win over last year's runner-up Alexander Zverev in the quarter-finals. Alcaraz delivered his most convincing display of the tournament in a ruthless demolition of Tommy Paul in the last round, while the in-form Musetti is targeting his first major final. Top seed and three-time Grand Slam winner Sinner takes on the most successful man ever to play the sport in a rivalry that connects one generation to the next. Sinner, 23, and Djokovic, 38, have split their eight meetings, but the Italian has won four of the last five matches to signal the undeniable power shift in men's tennis. Sinner is riding a 19-match winning run at Grand Slams as he chases a third successive major title, looking to go a step further at Roland Garros than last year's semi-final loss to Alcaraz in five sets. "(Djokovic) has shown

now in the last period that he is back to the level," said Sinner. "It's going to be... very, very difficult. He's such an experienced player, 24 Grand Slams. I think that says everything." A week before Roland Garros, Djokovic had not won a single match on clay this year. But after capturing his 100th ATP title in Geneva and arriving at the French Open battle-tested, the 38-year-old Serbian has steadily hit his stride. The three-time Roland Garros champion is two wins away from a record-breaking 25th major to move him out in front of Margaret Court, but he is aware of the magnitude of the task ahead. "Jannik is in tremendous form, and he has been the best player for the last couple of years," said Djokovic. "There is no bigger occasion for me... I just hope that I will be able to physically keep up." Djokovic could become the first man to beat the world's top three players en route to a Grand Slam title after defeating third-ranked Zverev in the last eight, with world number two Alcaraz a possible final opponent. "I think at the moment he's a bit underrated, to be honest," Zverev said after

his loss to the Serb. "I think like a lot of people count him out already, but this year he's had wins over Carlos at the Australian Open, he has had a win over me at the French Open. Forget the age. I think for any player, those are pretty good results." Alcaraz continues title defence Alcaraz resumes his burgeoning rivalry with Musetti, hoping to back up victories over the Italian in the Monte Carlo Masters final and Italian Open semi-finals. But Musetti, who also reached the last four in Madrid, is one of the form players on the ATP Tour and has carried that confidence into Roland Garros. "I mean he's playing great," said Alcaraz of his semi-final opponent. "It's going to be a beautiful battle, a beautiful match, I think we're both playing great tennis... it's going to be great for the people to watch as well." The Spaniard is targeting a fifth Grand Slam title this weekend and will be a heavy favourite on Friday despite Musetti's recent good run. Alcaraz has won the last five matches between the two since Musetti took their first meeting in the 2022 Hamburg Open final. He also dished out a straight-sets thrashing to Musetti in the 2023 French Open last 16, losing only seven games. World number seven Musetti will be playing in just his second Grand Slam semi-final, after a last-four defeat by Djokovic at Wimbledon last year. Should he go through and meet Sinner for the title, it would be the first all-Italian men's final at a Grand Slam.

Haliburton's last-second shot lifts Pacers over Thunder

OKLAHOMA CITY: Indiana's Tyrese Haliburton sank the game-winning basket in the final second to give the Pacers a stunning 111-110 fightback victory over Oklahoma City in Thursday's opening game of the NBA Finals. Haliburton, who had 14 points and 10 rebounds, gave the Pacers their only lead of the game on a dramatic 21-foot jump shot with 0.3 of a second remaining to deliver a shocker after Indiana had trailed by 15 points with 9:42 remaining. "We got the stop and coach trusts us in those moments to not call a timeout, trusts me in those moments, guys trust me and just trying to make a play," Haliburton said of the last shot. "Basketball is fun, man, winning is fun," he added in an on-court interview. "That's a great win for us." With a game-closing 14-2 run, the Pacers seized a 1-0 lead in the best-of-seven series with game two on Sunday at Oklahoma City. Pascal Siakam led the Pacers with 19 points while reserve Obi Toppin added 17, Myles Turner had 15 and Haliburton and Andrew Nembhard each added 14. "It was a total team effort, we had so many guys chip in. Obi was huge off the bench, Myles in the fourth, Andrew Nembhard in the fourth — so many



guys stepped up and just really proud of this group," Haliburton said. The finish evoked memories of the first game in the Eastern Conference finals, when a Haliburton shot at the buzzer bounced high and went in to force overtime as the Pacers stunned New York on the way to a series victory. The Pacers seek the first NBA crown in their 58-year history while the Thunder, who took a title in 1979 as Seattle, have not won a crown since moving to Oklahoma City in 2008. Indiana overcame 24 turnovers and a 38-point performance by Oklahoma City's NBA Most Valuable Player and top season scorer Shai Gilgeous-Alexander. A 12-2 run pulled Indiana within 98-94 with 6:16 remaining in the fourth quarter, with Turner and Toppin each making two three-pointers in the spurt.

The Thunder, with the NBA's best regular-season record, clung to the lead as Gilgeous-Alexander made a driving layup and added two free throws for a 106-98 edge with 3:24 remaining. Aaron Nesmith and Nembhard sank back-to-back three-pointers to lift Indiana within 108-105 with 1:59 remaining and after a layup by Gilgeous-Alexander, Nembhard made two free throws and Siakam scored off a rebound to lift the Pacers within 110-109. Nesmith rebounded a Gilgeous-Alexander miss to set up Haliburton's game-winning shot. "We just had to figure out how to win in so many different ways all year," Haliburton said. "There's so many weird different ways... we're a resilient group... We keep believing and we stay together."

Canada, US, Mexico brace for WC extravaganza

LOS ANGELES (AFP): The largest and most complex World Cup in history kicks off in just over a year's time, with the United States, Canada and Mexico co-hosting the football extravaganza against a backdrop of political tension triggered by Donald Trump. Forty-eight teams and millions of fans are set to descend on North America for the first ever World Cup shared by three nations, with the tournament getting under way on June 11 next year. In theory, the 23rd edition of the most popular sporting spectacle on the planet has all the makings of a successful tournament. An array of venues ranging from Mexico's iconic Estadio Azteca to the glittering \$5 billion SoFi Stadium in Los Angeles will play host to 104 games spread over nearly six weeks. The United States will

host the bulk of those fixtures - 78 -- with Canada and Mexico staging 13 each. All games from the quarter-finals onwards will be held in the United States, with the tournament culminating in the final at New Jersey's 82,500-seater MetLife Stadium on July 19, 2026. 'Like 104 Super Bowls' American officials believe the return of the World Cup to the country -- 32 years after the United States hosted the 1994 finals -- could represent a watershed moment for football in the country. "The World Cup is going to raise the attention of the sport in ways that nobody ever dreamed of," said Don Garber, the commissioner of Major League Soccer. FIFA's President Gianni Infantino meanwhile has been hyping next year's finals as the equivalent of "104 Super Bowls", contrasting the World Cup's estimated six billion viewers to the

120 million or so who tune in for the climax of the NFL season. There are historical precedents which suggest the hype might be justified. The 1994 World Cup in the United States remains the best attended World Cup in history, with an average of 68,600 fans flocking to each game. Yet while organisers eagerly anticipate a commercial success, with one FIFA estimate suggesting it could generate a mammoth \$11 billion in revenues, questions over other aspects of the tournament remain. The 48 teams -- up from 32 in 2022 -- will be spread into 12 groups of four, with the top two teams in each group advancing to the knockout rounds, and the eight best third-placed teams joining them to make up a last 32. That expansion is likely to reduce the sense of jeopardy in the first round, a problem seen in other major championships which have increased in size in recent years.

Visa backlog There is also the question of how the polarising policies of US President Trump may impact the tournament. Since taking office, Trump has launched a global trade war, repeatedly threatened to annex World Cup co-host Canada and launched an immigration crackdown at US borders which has seen overseas visitors from countries like France, Britain, Germany and Australia either detained or denied entry in recent months. Trump this week signed a travel ban on 12 countries including Iran, who have qualified for the World Cup, but the ban will not apply to players taking part in the tournament. Trump, who is chairman of a White House task force overseeing preparations for the World Cup, says overseas fans travelling to the tournament have nothing to fear. "Every part of the US govern-

ment will be working to ensure that these events are safe and successful, and those traveling to America to watch the competition have a seamless experience during every part of their visit," Trump said last month. FIFA chief Infantino, who has forged a close relationship with Trump, echoed that point, insisting that America was ready to "welcome the world." "Everyone who wants to come here to enjoy, to have fun, to celebrate the game will be able to do that," Infantino said. With one year to go however, it is by no means clear that Infantino's pledge will hold up. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said last month that some embassy staff may be required to work double-shifts to expedite visa processing, citing the example of Colombia, where US visa wait times are currently 15 months. "If you haven't

applied for a visa from Colombia already, you probably won't get here in time for the World Cup unless we go to double shifts," Rubio told lawmakers on Capitol Hill. Those fans who do make the trip to North America may also find themselves having to fork out a small fortune due to FIFA's reported decision to use dynamic pricing to determine ticket prices. That system, where prices on ticketing websites fluctuate according to demand, may well force fans to shell out thousands of dollars to obtain tickets for the highest profile games. "Dynamic pricing does not belong in football because it is an exploitation of fans' loyalty," Ronan Evain, the executive director of the Football Supporters Europe fan group told The Times. "It would be a fiasco for FIFA to use it for the World Cup."



**In brief****Archbishop  
felicitates nation  
on Eid**

RAWALPINDI (APP): Christian spiritual leader Archbishop of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, Dr. Joseph Arshad, has said that the auspicious festival teaches the lesson of self-sacrifice, love, affection, brotherhood and unity. In his message, he congratulated the nation on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha on behalf of the Christian community and said that like the rest of the world, Muslim brothers and sisters in Pakistan are also celebrating Eid-ul-Azha with devotion. "On behalf of the Christian community, I extend my heartfelt greetings to Muslim brothers and sisters on this blessed occasion", he said. The archbishop urged the people to pledge to promote peace, love, brotherhood in the society. He said that all those who have the passion to help others in the face of many economic and social difficulties need to step forward to meet the needs of the underprivileged with their wealth for the sake of the suffering and grieving humanity so that all the people of our country can celebrate the joys of Eid equally.

**Contingency  
plan placed for  
hospitals**

RAWALPINDI (APP): The allied hospitals in Rawalpindi have implemented special 24/7 emergency plans during the Eid holidays, deploying dedicated medical teams to handle the emergencies. District Headquarters Teaching Hospital has established a three-tier emergency response system as Medical Superintendent Dr. Ikram Niazi confirmed APP in a brief talk on Friday. "Our first-line teams are supplemented by secondary and tertiary backup units, all operating in shifts to ensure uninterrupted care", he said. Parallel preparations are underway at Holy Family Hospital and Benazir Bhutto Shaheed Hospital, where specialist staff will remain on alert throughout the holiday period. The District Health Authority has coordinated with civil administration to implement city-wide emergency protocols. "We're running public awareness campaigns about heatstroke prevention while maintaining fully staffed medical facilities," said DHA CEO Dr. Asif Abbas Khan Niazi. The measures specifically address risks during peak heat hours (12pm-4pm), when health impacts are most severe.

**Markets witness  
shoppers rush**

RAWALPINDI (APP): Ahead of Eid-ul-Azha, markets across the city are witnessing crowds as people rush to purchase knives, cutters, and other tools for sacrificial animals. Stoves, coal and liquid fuel are also among the major demands in the markets. The festive fervor includes people searching for decorative items like colorful strings, metallic bells, and ornamental necklaces to adorn their animals. Children are particularly enthusiastic about decorating sacrificial animals with small bells for animals' feet being a top seller. Adding to the hustle, households are preparing for post-sacrifice celebrations by stocking up on Bar BQ essentials. Shoppers are seen buying grilling skewers, coal, liquid fuels, and spices to host family gatherings featuring seekh kebabs and other traditional fast foods. Butcher shops and grocery stores report increased demand for Bar BQ ingredients as families plan festive meals. The city has witnessed a large number of open stalls selling animal feeds, strings, decors and other relevant goods.

## Gilani extends Eid-ul-Azha greetings, urges unity, sacrifice

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani has extended heartfelt Eid-ul-Azha greetings to Muslims across the world, calling it a time to remember the spirit of sacrifice and devotion.

In his message, Chairman Gilani said Eid-ul-Azha reminds us of the deep faith of Prophet Ibrahim (A.S.) and the willingness of Prophet Ismail (A.S.) to sacrifice for Allah's command.

This event, he said, sets a lasting example of obedience and dedication that continues to inspire

Muslims around the world.

He highlighted that the true message of Eid lies in selflessness and sacrifice, values that are essential for the progress of any nation. "We must give up personal interests and work together for the betterment of our country and society," he added.

Chairman Gilani called for unity beyond political divisions and stressed that Pakistan, built on great sacrifices, needs collective efforts for its development and prosperity.

He also urged people to remember the poor and those facing financial

hardship, ensuring that no one is left out during the Eid celebrations.

He said that sharing the joy of Eid with neighbours and underprivileged members of society reflects the true spirit of the occasion.

Paying tribute to the martyrs and defenders of the country, he said their sacrifices for Pakistan's security and progress must never be forgotten.

Gilani also asked the nation to pray for the oppressed people of Palestine and Indian-occupied Kashmir, expressing hope that Allah will ease their suffering.

## Islamabad prepares for Eid-ul-Azha with enhanced security

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Capital Development Authority (CDA), Islamabad Police, and district administration on Friday finalized a joint action plan to ensure fool-proof security, traffic management, and efficient waste disposal across the city during Eid-ul-Azha.

The decisions were made during a high-level meeting chaired by CDA Chairman and Chief Commissioner Islamabad Muhammad Ali Randhawa, along with Inspector General of Police (IGP) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, at the Safe City Headquarters, with senior officials from various departments in attendance. Authorities have activated a dedicated control room to monitor security and cleanliness operations through Safe City cameras and drone surveillance.

Over 895 police personnel will be deployed across the city, with special checkpoints established at key locations including Shah Faisal Mosque, imambargahs, parks, commercial centers, and graveyards to

**Eid-ul-Adha  
Prayer at Faisal  
Masjid at 6:30 AM**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Eid-ul-Adha prayer at Faisal Masjid will be held at 6:30 AM on Saturday(today). The prayer will be led by Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ilyas, Director General, Da'wah Academy, International Islamic University Islamabad.

ensure public safety.

For waste management, the CDA's sanitation department will deploy 2,500 workers along with modern machinery to handle sacrificial waste. Biodegradable plastic bags were being distributed citywide to encourage proper disposal. Residents have been advised to place waste outside their homes or contact the CDA helpline at 1334 for immediate collection.

Strict measures have been announced against illegal activities, including unauthorized cattle markets and hide collection camps.

The Chief Commissioner Randhawa directed law enforcement to take action against beggars and imposed a complete ban on swimming in dams and canals to prevent accidents. Park administrations have been instructed to ensure the safety of swings and recreational facilities.

Special arrangements have been made for graveyard cleanliness and security to accommodate visitors during the festive period. The administration has activated helplines and WhatsApp services for public complaints and emergencies.

Randhawa emphasized the importance of inter-departmental coordination, stating that the Safe City system and modern technology would be fully utilized to ensure a secure and clean Eid for all citizens.

With these comprehensive measures in place, Islamabad aims to provide residents with a safe, hygienic, and well-organized environment throughout the Eid-ul-Azha celebrations.

## Police continue crackdown against overcharging

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) have continued their enforcement drive during Eid holidays to curb overcharging and overloading on highways and motorways across the country.

According to an official spokesperson, the NHMP responded to various complaints from passengers and took action against transporters violating fare and load regulations. As a result, more than Rs 31,64,000 were refunded to

overcharged passengers traveling in different cities. In addition, authorities imposed fines exceeding Rs 18.1 million on vehicles found guilty of overloading.

Officers are conducting strict checks on vehicles to ensure compliance with safety and fare regulations. These checks are in effect on both motorways and national highways, and efforts are underway to maintain smooth and safe travel during the Eid rush.

NHMP teams are also holding roadside safety

briefings to raise awareness among drivers and passengers. Drivers are being reminded to always wear seat belts, observe speed limits, avoid driving while tired, and follow traffic rules.

The NHMP has urged the public to report any incidents of overcharging, overloading, or unsafe driving. Complaints or requests for assistance can be made by calling the Motorway Police Helpline at 130, which remains active throughout the holiday period.

## Citizens advised to dispose of sacrificial waste responsibly

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Capital Development Authority (CDA) and other city management officials on Friday distributed biodegradable bags among citizens to collect waste from sacrificial animals, advising them not to dispose of the remains near airports, as this can pose a risk to airplane safety and put passengers' lives at risk.

CDA Spokesperson talking to a private news channel said that the authority has issued guidelines for safe disposal of Eid waste, emphasizing the prohibition of dumping near airports to ensure aviation safety and environmental

protection.

Citizens are advised to use biodegradable bags for hygienic waste disposal, contributing to a safe environment, he added.

Disposing of sacrificial waste near airports poses significant risks to aviation safety, he said, adding, the presence of waste can attract birds and other wildlife, increasing the likelihood of bird strikes, which can be catastrophic for aircraft. Moreover, improper waste disposal can also lead to environmental pollution, contaminating soil and water sources, he mentioned.

Therefore, it is crucial

for citizens to adhere to the guidelines and use designated waste disposal facilities to mitigate these risks, he added.

PIA also presented a report highlighting the dangers of waste disposal near airports, citing a close call last year when an aircraft encountered a potential bird strike hazard due to improper waste management.

The airline warned that such incidents can have catastrophic consequences and urged citizens to dispose of Eid waste responsibly, adhering to designated waste disposal protocols to ensure aviation safety.

## Medical experts urge precautions forget heatwave threats on Eid holidays

RAWALPINDI (APP): Since the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has issued an advisory warning of an intense heatwave across Pakistan during the Eid holidays, the medical experts urged citizens to avoid unnecessary exit from home. According to the advisory, from June 8 to June 11, severe heat is expected in Rawalpindi, Islamabad, and other parts of the country.

The doctors emphasized that since Eid is a festive occasion when many people visit recreational spots, extra precautions should be taken. Rawalpindi city, in particular, will experience extreme heat between 12

PM and 6PM over the next four days.

Dr. Anwar, a medical specialist, spoke to APP and explained that this heatwave is caused by a sudden rise in temperature. He urged citizens, especially children and the elderly, to take preventive measures and avoid going outside unnecessarily. Dr. Anwar further elaborated that heat intensity increases when ultraviolet and infrared radiations from the sun strike the earth and get trapped in the atmosphere, raising the overall temperature.

Dr. Anwar also highlighted the need for special care during animal sacrifices on Eid. He suggested that

people should slaughter animals in shaded areas or under tents to avoid direct sunlight and heat exposure.

Additionally, Dr. Anwar advised parents to restrict children under 15 from going outside unnecessarily. While acknowledging the desire for outdoor celebrations, he recommended opting for evening outings instead. On the other hand, Dr. Yusuf Khan, a neurosurgeon, warned that extreme heat adversely affects the human brain. He advised covering the head with a cloth or using an umbrella when going outside during the day, as well as staying in shaded areas to minimize the impact of heat on the brain.



RAWALPINDI: People are loading sacrificial animal on vehicle after purchasing from the Animal Market, Bhatta Chowk in connection with Eidul Azha. —APP Photo

## Romanian ambassador extends Eid-ul-Azha greetings to Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Romanian Ambassador to Pakistan Dan Stoenescu, on the occasion of 'Eid-ul-Azha' has extended his warmest greetings and heartfelt felicitations to the people of Pakistan.

In a special message, the Ambassador reflected on the values of devotion, selflessness, and generosity that define this significant celebration. "Eid-ul-Azha is a time to reflect on values of devotion, selflessness, and generosity," Ambassador Stoenescu said. "It is a celebration that brings families and communities together—marked by acts of kindness, the sharing of meals, and the spirit of unity."

The Ambassador wished all those observing Eid-ul-Azha a joyful and peaceful celebration, expressing his hope that this occasion would bring happiness, prosperity, and harmony to families and communities across Pakistan. "Eid Mubarak from all of us at the Embassy of Romania in Islamabad, Pakistan," the Ambassador's message concluded, highlighting the spirit of friendship and goodwill between Romania and Pakistan.

## Rawalpindi city lits with electric lights on Eid

RAWALPINDI (APP): In connection with the arrival of Eid-ul-Azha, PHA Rawalpindi has decorated various places across the city with electric lights in a magnificent manner. Special arrangements have been made at parks and other visiting places to provide the best entertainment facilities to the public on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha.

The 6th Road, Chandni Chowk, Rehmanabad and Allama Iqbal Park and other important places have been decorated beautifully with lights. 'Eid Mubarak' light boards have also been displayed at various places. The important places of Rawalpindi are presenting charming scenes with the decorations, which are being well received by the public.

DG PHA Ahmed Hassan Ranjha has given special instructions to take all necessary steps to provide the best recreational facilities to the public on Eid-ul-Azha. PHA staff at parks and important recreational places will perform their duties diligently during the Eid days.

## IGP Rizvi orders robust Eid security, deploys 3,500 personnel

ISLAMABAD (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi presided over a high-level meeting at the Central Police Office to review the security arrangements for Eid-ul-Adha, directing enhanced security and surveillance measures across the federal capital.

A public relations officer told APP on Friday that the meeting was attended by all DIGs, SSPs, and SPs of Islamabad Police, during which the IGP ordered the deployment of over 3,500 officers and personnel to ensure the safety and security of citizens during the Eid holidays.

IG Rizvi said the security strategy includes intensified monitoring, snap checking, and patrolling throughout the city, especially around Eid congrega-

tions, cattle markets, recreational spots, and commercial centers.

IG Rizvi said a special security plan has been formulated for Chand Raat, with particular focus on shopping areas, markets, and entry-exit points. Patrolling units will be active on foot, vehicles, and motorcycles to ensure swift responses and vigilance.

IG Rizvi said surveillance through Safe City cameras must be enhanced for effective monitoring, while all control rooms should remain fully functional with upgraded communication systems to respond to any emergencies.

IG Rizvi said help desks established to assist citizens must remain proactive and responsive, ensuring quick resolution of complaints and assistance to the

public. IG Rizvi said security at important government buildings and places of worship will remain a top priority, while surprise checkpoints will be established across different sectors of the city.

IG Rizvi said patrolling will be further strengthened by specialized units including the Dolphin Force, Ababeel

Emergency Response Units, and other mobile teams to maintain a visible and effective police presence. He said the officers must ensure discipline and performance among subordinates while also taking care of their welfare during Eid. "Our top priority is to protect the lives and property of the citizens of Islamabad and maintain peace and order during the festivities," IGP Rizvi added.

## MCI shuts down over 100 illegal cattle sale points

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Metropolitan Corporation (MCI) has shut down over 100 illegal cattle sale points and seized 1,675 animals, relocating them to official markets.

The MCI along with Capital Development Authority (CDA) launched joint operations against illegal cattle markets across the federal capital ahead of Eid-ul-Azha.

The operations targeted high-traffic areas including Pakistan Town, Gagri, VIP Ghauri, Sanam Chowk, Kuri Road, Park Road, Islamabad Expressway, IJP Road, Saidpur, Murree Road, and Sector E-11.

The crackdown follows directives from CDA Chairman, Chief Commissioner, and DG Civil Defence Muhammad Ali Randhawa to ensure public safety, cleanliness, and smooth traffic flow.

Dr. Anum Fatima, Deputy DG Enforcement and DMA Director, told APP on Friday that, "Special monitoring teams, backed by magistrates and assistant commissioners, are working round the clock to prevent unauthorized sales." She emphasized that citizens should only use designated markets at Bhinder Stop Japan Road, Zia Mosque, Sultana Foundation, Sangjani GT Road, and Sector I-12.

She warned that violators face strict legal action, including fines and animal confiscation.

Fatima confirmed all basic facilities like veterinary services, water, sanitation, and security are available at official markets.

This campaign forms part of broader government efforts to maintain public order and cleanliness during Eid celebrations across Islamabad.

## Beware of Congo Virus; health authorities issue Congo virus alert

RAWALPINDI (APP): Punjab Health Department has issued urgent warnings about Congo risks during Eid-ul-Azha celebrations. The virus needs special safety measures while visiting cattle markets and slaughtering activities.

The Punjab Health and Population Department has intimated strict precautions for those visiting animal markets. "Wear masks, gloves and apply repellent lotions when examining animals," advised a health ministry spokesperson.

He particularly advised elderly, children and immunocompromised individuals to avoid cattle markets visits. "All slaughterers must wear protective gear and ensure proper insecticide spraying of animal enclosures," said the spokesman. The department has activated a 24/7 helpline (1033) for the concerns and confirmed all major hospitals are prepared to handle potential cases.

## Health experts advise consumption of moderate meat on Eid

ISLAMABAD (APP): Eid-ul-Azha is a joyous occasion marked by sacrifices, gratitude, and sharing over the course of three days, families not only prepare a variety of delicious dishes but also host gatherings such as barbecue parties to celebrate with relatives and friends.

During this period, the consumption of meat increases significantly, which can sometimes lead to health complications if precautions are not observed. Health experts advise moderation and mindful eating during the festival to prevent health issues.

Talking to APP on Friday, Dr. Arooj Ejaz, MBBS, M.Sc. in Nutrition and Consultant Nutritionist at Medicsi Hospital Islamabad, highlighted several important guidelines.

She recommended that after an animal is sacrificed, one should wait at least 30 minutes before processing the meat.

"This allows the muscles to relax and initial blood to drain properly, enhancing both the quality and safety of the meat," she explained.

Dr. Arooj also stressed the importance of cleaning the meat with potable water to remove blood, dirt, and debris. However, she advised against excessive soaking, which can promote bacterial growth.

While red meat is a valuable source of protein, iron, zinc, and B vitamins, excessive consumption — particularly over a short span — can overwhelm the body.

"Large portions of fatty cuts contribute to high saturated fat intake, which can raise cholesterol levels and increase the risk of heart disease," she warned.

Dr. Arooj further cautioned that overconsumption of meat can slow digestion, causing bloating, constipation, and indigestion, she also advised to

take 8 to 10 glass of water for better digestion.

These problems are often worsened when meals lack adequate fibre from vegetables, fruits, and whole grains, she added.

She also highlighted that a high-protein load puts additional strain on the liver and kidneys, particularly in individuals with pre-existing conditions such as diabetes.

"Many patients tend to forget their dietary restrictions during Eid," she noted, adding that overeating red meat can significantly worsen existing health issues which may result in hospitalisation.

Despite the festive atmosphere and the fact that meat consumption during Bakra Eid is higher than usual, it is important for people to remain mindful. Moderation and proper precautions are strongly advised to enjoy the festival without compromising health.



**Indonesia appoints new charge d'affaires**  
KABUL (Ariana News): Nanda Evalist, the newly appointed Chargé d'Affaires of Indonesia to Afghanistan, held an introductory meeting with Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi in Kabul, the ministry announced on Friday. During the meeting, Muttaqi welcomed Evalist and wished him success in his new diplomatic mission. He emphasized that Indonesia is one of the key countries in the Islamic world.

**Governor announces full preparations for Eid**  
KABUL (TOLONews): Aminullah Obaid, the Governor of Kabul, announced that necessary preparations have been made for the celebration of Eid al-Adha in the province. He said that, to ensure better coordination, a special committee has been formed with representatives from various ministries and relevant institutions. While assuring the public about the security measures in the capital, he urged citizens to cooperate with security forces during the Eid days.

Asia is comparable to a living body composed of soil and water. The heart that beats inside the body is Afghanistan. The destruction of Afghanistan would be the destruction of Asia. And in its progress and prosperity lies the well-being of Asia. - Allama Iqbal

# 775 migrant families deported from Iran, Pakistan ahead of Eid



KABUL (Amu tv): Figures by the Taliban-run refugees ministry show that 775 families were deported from Iran and Pakistan on Thursday, June 5, as regional the mass expulsion of undocumented migrants continue, even ahead of the Eid al-Adha holiday.

The figures show that 715 families were expelled from Iran and 60 from Pakistan. Border data showed that 42 families re-entered the country through the Torkham crossing in Nangarhar Province, while 18 crossed from Pakistan through Spin Boldak in Kandahar.

From Iran, 592 families entered via Islam Qala in Herat, and another 123 were returned through the Milak border at Pul-e-Abrisham in Nimruz Province.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported that Iran forcibly deported 15,675 Afghan families during the month of May alone. The agency described the current wave of deportations as unprecedented in scope since the beginning of 2025.

The latest expulsions come amid heightened economic and humanitarian challenges inside Afghanistan, where returnees often face deteriorating conditions and limited support.

In a recent report, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) warned that systemic inequalities and a lack of income-generating opportunities have made reintegration especially difficult for returnees. Only 14 percent of deported families

reportedly have access to educational services, compared with the broader Afghan population.

The UN agency also noted that worsening economic conditions and fragile social systems are significant barriers to accessing basic services, such as housing, healthcare and employment, for many of the recently returned families.

The deportations from Iran and Pakistan have accelerated in recent months, driven in part by political tensions, domestic pressures, and growing anti-immigrant sentiment in both countries. Human rights organizations have called for a halt to the forced returns, citing concerns about protection, legal status, and humanitarian obligations under international law.

## Weapons, ammunition seized in Kabul operations

KABUL (BNA): The Ministry of National Defense has reported the seizure of a cache of weapons and ammunition in Kabul, an operation was executed by the reconnaissance and intelligence personnel of the 313 Central Army Corps.

According to the ministry's statement, two suspects were apprehended during separate operations conducted in the 21st district of Kabul and surrounding areas of Sarubi district. The confiscated items include five Kalashnikov rifles, six pistols, and one American-made missile, along with multiple magazines.

According to the Ministry, arrested individuals are currently undergoing preliminary investigations and are expected to be transferred to the relevant authorities shortly.

## Ghani says Afghan migrants are being used as tools of pressure

KABUL (Amu tv): In a message on Eid on Friday, former President Ashraf Ghani warned that Afghan migrants are being used as instruments of political pressure, expressing alarm over what he described as a worsening crisis facing displaced Afghans across the globe.

In a message marking Eid al-Adha, Ghani said the wave of deportations planned by Western governments is "painful and troubling," and reflects a shift in how Afghan migrants are perceived and treated.

"Afghan refugees have gone from being a population used for utility to one used for pressure," he said in the statement. "This shift is not only dehumanizing — it is a source of profound psychological and emotional distress."

Ghani, who fled Afghanistan on August 15, 2021, as the Taliban seized control of Kabul, said many Afghans abroad now face precarious legal and humanitarian conditions, while those at home remain trapped by drought, unemployment and political uncertainty. "The Afghan migrant is no longer simply a tool — they have become a tool of pressure," he said.

He called on Afghans to unify in the face of continued displacement and national fragmentation. "Our connection to this land, to a region with which we share thousands of years of history, is not a choice — it is an obligation," he said.

Invoking Afghanistan's turbulent past and its long struggle for statehood, Ghani urged citizens to work toward rebuilding the country through what he described as "collective wisdom." He expressed hope that Afghans could mark the 300th anniversary of the country's founding in 2047 in a "unified and prosperous" nation.

The statement comes amid growing international criticism of recent deportation policies in the United States, Europe and other regions, where authorities have begun returning Afghan asylum seekers despite ongoing humanitarian concerns. Human rights groups warn the expulsions place vulnerable individuals at grave risk.

# MLC officials hope Afghan players can participate despite new US travel ban



KABUL (Ariana News): Major League Cricket (MLC) officials remain optimistic that Afghan players, including Rashid Khan and Noor Ahmad, will be able to fulfill their contracts for the 2025 season, despite the new US travel ban signed by President Donald Trump, set to take effect next week.

The proclamation restricts entry into the United States for nationals from 12 countries, including Afghanistan, Burma, Chad, Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Haiti, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen. According to Trump, the ban aims to "protect the national security and national interest of the United States and its people."

According to ESPNcricinfo, seven Afghan players are under contract for the 2025 MLC season: Rashid Khan, Azmatullah Omarzai, and Naveen-ul-Haq (all with MI New York); Gulbadin Naib, Fazalhaq Farooqi, and Waqar Salamkheil (Seattle Orcas); and Noor Ahmad (Texas Super Kings).

The ban, effective from June 9, includes an exemption for "any athlete or member of an athletic team... traveling for the World Cup, Olympics, or other major sporting event as determined by the Secretary of State." The order also applies only to foreign nationals who are outside the US and without a valid visa at the time the ban takes effect.

ESPNcricinfo reports that some players have already entered the US with valid visas, while others have yet to apply or travel. A league official expressed hope that MLC will be classified as a 'major sporting event' by

Secretary of State Marco Rubio, which would help ensure Afghan players' participation.

Officials from affected franchises are exploring all options, including flying players to the US before the ban starts. They are also consulting with MLC and relevant authorities for guidance.

An MLC spokesperson stated: "We're continuing to monitor the situation and are working with the relevant authorities to minimize travel disruptions for overseas players ahead of the start of Major League Cricket next week. We continue to attract some of the best players from around the world to come over to the US to showcase their talent, along with the best cricketers from the USA, and we are set to have the most exciting tournament to date this summer."

The ban explicitly mentions the Olympics—set for Los Angeles in 2028—as an exempt event, meaning Afghanistan would be eligible to compete in the men's T20 cricket event there, if qualified. MLC's 2025 season kicks off on June 12 with a rematch of last year's final between Washington Freedom and San Francisco at Oakland Coliseum.

# 190 lives lost in Ghazni traffic accidents



GHAZNI (TOLONews): The Ghazni Traffic Department reports that 190 people have lost their lives and another 894 have been injured in traffic accidents in the province over the past 14 months.

According to the department's statistics, these casualties occurred in 499 traffic incidents throughout the province.

Noor Mohammad Rahbar, Director of Ghazni Traffic Department, said: "Since the beginning of 1403, there have been 499 traffic accidents in Ghazni province, resulting in the deaths of 190 people, including 36 children and 17 women. These accidents have mainly occurred on the highways and in the districts of Ghazni. Additionally, 894 others have been injured in these incidents."

Officials added that various programs have been implemented to prevent traffic accidents and efforts are ongoing in this regard.

Rahbar added: "To control vehicle speeds, we have installed necessary equipment in vehicles, and in collaboration with provincial leadership, we have launched joint efforts to reduce the number of traffic incidents. Besides the Kabul-Kandahar highway, we have established both temporary and permanent checkpoints on the roads to prevent accidents."

Residents and drivers in Ghazni are calling on local authorities to install traffic signs on highways, reconstruct roads, and strictly enforce traffic laws. Shoab Ahmad, a resident of Ghazni, said: "Traffic signs

should be installed on highways, drivers must receive professional training, and highways should be constructed to standard specifications."

Rahmatullah, another resident of Ghazni, stated: "There is heavy congestion on the Kabul-Kandahar highway. Drivers are careless and drive at high speeds. One of the major causes is also the narrowness of the roads."

Amanullah, a driver in Ghazni, said: "Drivers must recognize their responsibilities and drive with utmost caution. They should keep their vehicles under control, as the number of traffic accidents has significantly increased, causing substantial loss of life and property."

Most traffic accidents in Ghazni occur along the Kabul-Kandahar highway.

# One-fifth of Afghanistan's population needs humanitarian aid



KABUL (TOLONews): The World Food Programme (WFP) has reported that one out of every five people in Afghanistan is in need of humanitarian assistance to survive. According to the organization, if global support decreases, around 15 million people in Afghanistan could face severe hunger.

The WFP expressed concern over the decline in international aid to Afghanistan and stated that between May and October of this year, 9.5 million people will require urgent food assistance.

The WFP report stated: "An estimated 9.5 million people in Afghanistan (21 percent of the population) are classified in IPC Phase 3 or above (Crisis or worse) between May and October 2025. This includes 1.6 million people (4 percent of the total population) classified in IPC Phase 4 (Emergency) and around 7.93 million people (17 percent of the total population) classified in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis)."

Mohammad Javid, a Kabul resident, said: "Even with the work we do, we can't even cover our rent; the rent is three thousand, and we are three to four months behind. We just rely on God. People come to buy fruit for Eid, and we just watch them."

Aziz Agha, another Kabul resident, stated: "Our request to the Islamic Emirate is to provide jobs to the people, activate companies, and get the factories running again. The people of Afghanistan have suffered a lot."

Alongside food insecurity, poverty and unemployment remain major challenges facing both the Afghan people and the caretaker government. These problems have worsened following recent political changes and the reduction of foreign aid.

Despite repeated promises by the Islamic Emirate officials to combat poverty and unemployment, the situation remains critical.

Abdul Rahman Habib, spokesperson for the Ministry of Economy, said: "Climate change, consecutive droughts, and economic restrictions have worsened the economic and living conditions of the people. Addressing this requires joint national and international efforts. Currently, priority is being given to supporting the agriculture sector, strengthening domestic production, reducing dependence on imports, and managing water resources."

Some experts believe that the solution lies in domestic and international investment, job creation, support for agriculture, and strengthening development programs.

Abdul Zahoor Madbar, an economic affairs expert, stated: "Afghanistan is an

untouched land, and any economic initiative can benefit its economy. Working on infrastructure, development, and expansion projects will also yield long-term benefits. We can better manage natural resources and organize human capital to move toward economic dynamism and growth."

According to reports by international organizations, Afghanistan is facing one of the worst humanitarian and economic crises in the world following the recent political upheaval. Severe reductions in international aid, financial sanctions, and banking restrictions have left millions of Afghans unable to meet their basic needs.

## Medical Equipments donated to Ghazni

GHAZNI (BNA): The Ghazni Provincial Public Health Department has received a significant donation of medical and non-medical equipment valued at 30 million afis. This initiative was made possible through the financial support of the JAC organization.

Dr. Mohammad Zarf Zirq, the provincial Public Health Director, announced that the donation includes seven ambulances, 33 motorcycles, an oxygen production machine, and six ultrasound machines. Notably, the oxygen machine has the capacity to fill 100.48-kilogram balloons within 24 hours.

# Carpet weaving falters in Ghor as women lose economic ground

GHOR (Amu tv): Once a cornerstone of local industry and a rare source of income for women in Ghor province, traditional carpet weaving is now in decline. Artisans and community members say the craft — long practiced in small workshops and home-based looms — is collapsing under the weight of economic neglect, limited markets and lack of institutional support.

Farahnaz, a veteran weaver in a remote village, sits hunched over a wooden loom in a modest workshop.

For years, she and other women have sustained their families through carpet weaving, a labor-intensive skill passed down through generations. But today, she says, the

work barely pays.

"This carpet belongs to a trader. He dropped it off and asked us to weave it," she said in an interview. "But we get nothing. The last time, we were paid 1,500 afghanis [about \$20] for a carpet made by three people. That same trader just called asking for another one, but I'm going to tell him it's not worth it. We can't keep going."

Carpet weaving has traditionally been one of the few viable sources of income for women in rural Afghanistan. But according to local sources, demand has fallen sharply, and prices have not kept up with inflation or the cost of living.

Others working in house-

hold-based weaving cooperatives shared similar frustrations. Without access to reliable buyers, export channels, or even basic logistical support, many say the return on their



labor is vanishingly small.

Sitara, another weaver in Ghor, says her earnings have shrunk dramatically over the years. "Now I'm getting older. My eyesight is weaker. We used to do better, but not anymore," she said.

Experts say the situation highlights broader concerns about women's economic exclusion under Taliban rule. While the carpet industry once offered a rare path to financial independence in Afghanistan's rural provinces, it has suffered not only from market disruptions, but also from the Taliban's broad restrictions on women's participation in public and economic life.

"With little to no institutional backing, and as broader

sanctions and restrictions take their toll, women are increasingly being pushed out of even traditional economic spaces," said one Kabul-based economist who asked not to be named for security reasons. "Industries like carpet weaving are more than just livelihoods — they're lifelines. And we're watching them vanish."

As the industry contracts, many women are left with few alternatives — and little hope that conditions will improve soon. For weavers like Farahnaz, the work continues for now, but with diminishing returns and rising uncertainty.

"It's not just about money," she said. "It's about having something of your own. And now, even that is slipping away."



# Ukraine war ‘existential,’ Kremlin says, launching revenge strikes

KYIV, MOSCOW (AFP): The Kremlin said on Friday that the Ukraine war was “existential” for Russia, after it launched a wave of retaliatory drone and missile strikes that killed at least three in Kyiv. AFP journalists heard air raid sirens and explosions ring out over the capital throughout the night as Ukrainian air defence batteries intercepted waves of Russian drones and missiles.

Kyiv announced that Russia had fired 45 missiles and 407 drones in the barrage, after Russian President Vladimir Putin vowed retaliation for an audacious Ukrainian attack on several Russian airbases. President Volodymyr Zelensky in response urged allies to “decisively” ramp up pressure on Russia to halt the war, which has left tens of thousands dead over more than three years of fighting.

“We heard a drone — we heard it coming very close, and then there was an explosion,” Ksenia, a Kyiv resident, told AFP outside a multiple-storey housing block that was left with a charred and gaping hole. “Our windows and window panes were blown out, but we got away with a slight shock,” she added, standing in a courtyard littered with broken glass and debris.

The Kremlin on Friday cast its three-year invasion as nothing short of a battle for the “future” of Russia. “For us it is an existential issue, an issue on our national interest, safety, on our future and the future of our children, of our country,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters, responding to US President Donald Trump’s comparison of Moscow and Kyiv to brawling chil-

dren.

Zelensky said at least three people had been killed in the capital, and that Russia had targeted nine regions of Ukraine, including Lviv and Volyn in the west, which border EU and Nato member Poland. “If someone does not put pressure and gives the war more time to take lives, they are complicit and responsible. We need to act decisively,” Zelensky wrote on social media.

Deadly attacks have escalated in recent weeks even as the two sides hold talks aimed at ending the conflict triggered by Russia’s February 2022 invasion. Cities and villages have been destroyed across eastern Ukraine and millions forced to flee their homes, with Russia’s forces controlling around one-fifth of Ukraine’s territory. Russian aerial assaults have become larger in recent weeks as concerns build over Ukraine’s strained air defence capacity.

The defence ministry in Moscow said its forces had launched the “massive” missile and drone strike in “response” to recent attacks by Kyiv on its territory. Putin earlier this week told Trump that Moscow would retaliate over the Ukrainian attack on Sunday in which drones damaged nuclear-capable military planes at Russian air bases, including thousands of kilometres behind the front lines in Siberia. The brazen operation, 18 months in the planning, saw Kyiv smuggle more than 100 small drones into Russia, park them near Russian air bases and unleash them in a coordinated attack.

Despite several recent rounds of meetings between Ukrainian and

Russian delegations, Putin has repeatedly rejected a ceasefire, and has issued a host of sweeping demands on Ukraine if it wants to halt the fighting. They include completely pulling troops out of four regions claimed by Russia, but which its army does not fully control, an end to western military support, and a ban on Ukraine joining Nato.

The overnight Russian attack left multiple fires burning in various districts of the capital. Three first responders from the state emergency service were killed while dealing with an earlier strike. Interior Minister Igor Klymenko said. “They were working under fire to help people,” he said, adding nine more were wounded and that “doctors are fighting for their lives.”

Kyiv’s mayor said earlier that four were killed in the capital but later revised down that toll. Several strikes also hit the city of Luts and the Ternopil region in western Ukraine. At least 49 people were wounded in total, Zelensky said.

Moscow meanwhile said Ukrainian strikes overnight on Russia wounded three people in the western Tula region, while Kyiv claimed to have staged successful attacks on two air fields deep inside Russian territory. Footage shared on social media showed a large fire and smoke billowing into the air at an oil facility that serves a military site in Russia’s Saratov region, which has been frequently targeted. The Russian defence ministry said it downed 174 Ukrainian drones overnight. Ten downed drones were headed for the Russian capital, according to Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin.

## Homes smashed, help slashed: No respite for returning Syrians

DAMASCUS (Reuters): Around a dozen Syrian women sat in a circle at a UN-funded center in Damascus, happy to share stories about their daily struggles, but their bonding was overshadowed by fears that such meet-ups could soon end due to international aid cuts.

The community center, funded by the United Nations’ refugee agency (UNHCR), offers vital services that families cannot get elsewhere in a country scarred by war, with an economy broken by decades of mismanagement and Western sanctions. “We have no stability. We are scared and we need support,” said Fatima Al-Abbiad, a mother of four. “There are a lot of problems at home, a lot of tension, a lot of violence because of the lack of income.”

But the center’s future now hangs in the balance as the UNHCR has had to cut down its activities in Syria because of the international aid squeeze caused by US President Donald Trump’s decision to halt foreign aid. The cuts will close nearly half of the UNHCR centers in Syria and the widespread services they provide — from educational support and medical equipment to mental health and counselling sessions — just as the population needs them the most. There are hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees returning home after the fall of Bashar Assad last year.

UNHCR’s representative in Syria, Gonzalo Vargas Llosa, said the situation was a “disaster” and that the agency would struggle to help returning refugees. “I think that we have been forced — here I use very deliberately the word forced — to adopt plans which are more modest than we would have liked,” he told Context/Thomson Reuters Foundation in Damascus.

“It has taken us years to build that

extraordinary network of support, and almost half of them are going to be closed exactly at the moment of opportunity for refugee and IDPs (internally displaced people) return.” A UNHCR spokesperson told the Thomson Reuters Foundation that the agency would shut down around 42 percent of its 122 community centers in Syria in June, which will deprive some 500,000 people of assistance and reduce aid for another 600,000 that benefit from the remaining centers.

The UNHCR will also cut 30 percent of its staff in Syria, said the spokesperson, while the livelihood program that supports small businesses will shrink by 20 percent unless it finds new funding. Around 100 people visit the center in Damascus each day, said Mirna Mimas, a supervisor with GOPA-DERD, the church charity that runs the center with UNHCR.

Already the center’s educational programs, which benefited 900 children last year, are at risk, said Mimas. Nour Huda Madani, 41, said she had been “lucky” to receive support for her autistic child at the center. “They taught me how to deal with him,” said the mother of five.

Another visitor, Odette Badawi, said the center was important for her well-being after she returned to Syria five years ago, having fled to Lebanon when war broke out in Syria in 2011. “(The center) made me feel like I am part of society,” said the 68-year-old. Mimas said if the center closed, the loss to the community would be enormous: “If we must tell people we are leaving, I will weep before they do,” she said.

Aid funding for Syria had already been declining before Trump’s seismic cuts to the US Agency for International Development this year

and cuts by other countries to international aid budgets. But the new blows come at a particularly bad time.

Since former president Assad was ousted by Islamist rebels last December, around 507,000 Syrians have returned from neighboring countries and around 1.2 million people displaced inside the country went back home, according to UN estimates. Llosa said, given the aid cuts, UNHCR would have only limited scope to support the return of some of the 6 million Syrians who fled the country since 2011.

“We will need to help only those that absolutely want to go home and simply do not have any means to do so,” Llosa said. “That means that we will need to be very selective as opposed to what we wanted, which was to be expansive.” Ayoub Merhi Hariri had been counting on support from the livelihood program to pay off the money he borrowed to set up a business after he moved back to Syria at the end of 2024.

After 12 years in Lebanon, he returned to Daraa in southwestern Syria to find his house destroyed — no doors, no windows, no running water, no electricity. He moved in with relatives and registered for livelihood support at a UN-backed center in Daraa to help him start a spice manufacturing business to support his family and ill mother. While his business was doing well, he said he would struggle to repay his creditors the 20 million Syrian pounds (\$1,540) he owed them now that his livelihood support had been cut. “Thank God (the business) was a success, and it is generating an income for us to live off,” he said. “But I can’t pay back the debt,” he said, fearing the worst. “I’ll have to sell everything.”

## ‘Pakistan a responsible nuclear state’

**E.P. Report**

MULTAN: Senate Chairman Yusuf Raza Gilani said on Friday that Pakistan was a responsible nuclear power, acted with maturity during the recent conflict with India following the Pahalgam attack. Speaking to the media after inaugurating a bakery at Old Shujabad Road, Yusuf Raza, Gilani praised the joint role of the military and civil leadership for exercising patience to de-escalate the situation on borders.

He noted that Pakistani nation responded unitedly to the war threats, especially after India attempted to unilaterally block water supplies to the country. Highlighting the government’s principled stance, Gilani said that Pakistan had immediately called for a neutral investigation into the Pahalgam incident, but India arrogantly refused to accept the proposal. He emphasized that defensive steps taken by Pakistan were appreciated globally. Gilani reiterated that both Pakistan and India were declared nuclear states, and warned that any misadventure would trigger chaos and destruction in the region.

## Thailand ready for action in Cambodia border dispute

BANGKOK: Thailand’s military has said it is ready to launch a “high-level operation” to counter violations of its sovereignty, offering its strongest comments yet following the re-eruption of a long-running border dispute with Cambodia.

In a statement, the Thai military said its intelligence had gathered “worrisome” indications that Cambodia has stepped up its military readiness along their shared border. “The army is now ready for a high-level military operation in case it is necessary to retaliate against the violation of sovereignty,” the statement said.

“Operations of units at the border have been conducted carefully, calmly and based on an understanding of the situation to prevent losses on all sides, but at the same time, are ready to defend the country’s sovereignty to the fullest extent if the situation is called for,” the statement added. The top brass of Thailand’s armed forces are scheduled to hold a closed-door meeting on Friday afternoon, while the country’s army, navy and air force have also raised their combat readiness, according to the Thai Public Broadcasting Service (Thai PBS).

Colonel Chainarong Kasee, a commander of

Thailand’s 12th infantry regiment of the Royal Guards, said his troops have been ordered to check that all equipment is in good working order. Thai PBS also reports. On May 28, Cambodia’s Ministry of National Defence said Thai troops shot and killed one of its soldiers during a brief firefight in a disputed border region between Cambodia’s Preah Vihear province and Thailand’s Ubon Ratchathani province.

The ministry accused Thai soldiers of opening fire first on a Cambodian military post in the contested border zone. Thailand’s Minister of Defence Phumtham Wechayachai said Cambodian forces opened fire first. The Southeast Asian neighbours have repeatedly clashed in Preah Vihear’s border region over the years, where a 900-year-old temple sits at the heart of a decades-long dispute that has stirred nationalist sentiment on both sides of the border.

Several deadly clashes took place in the area between 2008 – the year Cambodia registered the temple as a UNESCO World Heritage Site – and 2011, killing about 40 people, including five civilians. A 2013 ruling by the International Court of

Justice (ICJ) upheld a 1962 judgement by the same body awarding part of the land around Preah Vihear temple to Cambodia and instructing Thailand to withdraw its personnel stationed in the area.

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet, the son of long-ruling former leader Hun Sen, has said Cambodia will file disputes over four parts of the border to the ICJ for adjudication and asked for Thailand’s cooperation in the process. Thailand, which has not recognised the ICJ’s jurisdiction since 1960, has instead called for bilateral talks.

“Thailand and Cambodia already have existing bilateral mechanisms to address these issues,” Thailand’s government said in a statement. “Thailand reiterates its position as a neighbour committed to resolving issues peacefully and based on international law, treaties, and agreements ... as well as satellite imagery and other verified evidence,” the statement added. A meeting of the Cambodia-Thailand Joint Boundary Commission – which addresses border demarcation issues – is slated for June 14. — Aljazeera



MAKKAH: COAS Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir performing Umrah.

## Target killers gun down lawyer in Bannu

**E.P. Report**

BANNU: In a shocking incident, advocate Tufail Khan, a resident of Bozha Khel, was gunned down by unidentified motorcycle riders in Bannu’s Nazim Bazaar on Friday. The unidentified armed motorcyclists fled the scene immediately after the target killing in the city.

According to police, Tufail Advocate was on his motorcycle heading to the market from his home when the assailants, who were lying in wait, opened fire on him. Advocate Tufail Khan sustained critical injuries and was rushed to the hospital but succumbed to his wounds on the way.

Bannu police reached the site of the incident shortly after and have collected evidence from the spot and launched an investigation into the targeted killing. It is pertinent to mention that this is the third high-profile shooting in Bannu within just three weeks. On June 2, a police constable named Ibrar was shot dead in the Tarang area while on his way to pick up his children from school.

He was attached to the Investigation Branch. The attackers, again unidentified, ambushed him near the Tarang graveyard and escaped after killing him on the spot. Earlier, on May 15, two people were killed, including a police employee named Noor Muhammad, in a violent shootout between two rival groups in Khojri within the jurisdiction of the Kukki police station. Police later confirmed that the dispute stemmed from a property issue between the parties. A case was registered, and an investigation was ongoing.

## Formation of Opp alliance urged

**E.P. Report**

JHELUM: Former Federal Minister Fawad Chaudhry has reiterated that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) remains the most popular political party in the country, despite recent challenges.

Speaking to media he said that the Sambrial election result is evident proof that PTI’s popularity remains undiminished, adding that political tides naturally fluctuate over time. Chaudhry emphasized that the public’s vote continues to be for PTI founder Imran Khan, not just the party label. He expressed skepticism that the sentence in the £190 million case against Khan would be suspended, suggesting legal hurdles still remain.

He revealed that he had met the PTI founder three times in recent days. During these meetings, Imran Khan advised the party to pursue the formation of an opposition alliance. However, Fawad admitted that PTI’s inexperience was a key reason behind the failure to bring such an alliance to fruition. He also noted that Khan has directed Senator Shibli Faraz regarding the party’s future political strategy and emphasized that the country must move toward stability. Fawad also raised concerns that Senator Ijaz Chaudhry was issued production orders but has not been allowed to speak in parliament.

## Israel issues evacuation warning for Gaza

GAZA CITY (AFP): The Israeli military issued an evacuation order for residents of parts of Gaza City on Friday ahead of an attack, as it presses an intensified campaign in the battered Palestinian territory. “This is a final and urgent warning ahead of an impending strike,” army spokesman Avichay Adraee said.

The army “will strike all areas from which rockets are launched.” The evacuation order comes at the beginning of the Eidul Azha holiday, one of the main religious festivals of the Muslim calendar. The Israeli military has recently stepped up its campaign in Gaza in what it says is a renewed push to defeat Hamas, whose October 2023 attack sparked the war.

International calls for a negotiated ceasefire have grown in recent weeks. Hamas’s lead negotiator, Khalil Al-Hayya said that the Palestinian Islamist group was ready to enter a new round of talks aimed at sealing a permanent ceasefire in Gaza. Talks aimed at

brokering a new ceasefire have failed to yield a breakthrough since the last brief truce fell apart in March with the resumption of Israeli operations in Gaza.

Israel and Hamas appeared close to an agreement late last month, but a deal proved elusive, with each side accusing the other of scuppering a US-backed proposal. Israel has faced mounting pressure to allow more aid into Gaza, after it imposed a more than two-month blockade that led to widespread shortages of food and other essentials.

It recently eased the blockade and has worked with the newly formed, US-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation to implement a new aid distribution mechanism via a handful of centers in south and central Gaza. But since its inception, the GHF has been a magnet for criticism from the UN and other members of the aid world — which only intensified following a recent string of deadly incidents near its facilities.

Hamas’s unprecedented attack on Israel resulted in the deaths of 1,218 people,

mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on official figures. According to the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza, at least 4,402 people have been killed since Israel resumed its offensive on March 18, taking the war’s overall toll to 54,677, mostly civilians.

Meanwhile, Defense Minister Israel Katz warned Friday that Israel will keep striking Lebanon until it disarms Iranian-backed militant group Hezbollah, a day after Israeli air strikes hit Beirut’s southern suburbs.

“There will be no calm in Beirut, and no order or stability in Lebanon, without security for the State of Israel. Agreements must be honored and if you do not do what is required, we will continue to act, and with great force,” Katz said in a statement. Meanwhile, Iran has condemned the Israeli “aggression” against Lebanon on Friday. Foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei described strikes “as a blatant act of aggression against Lebanon’s territorial integrity and sovereignty.”

## China seeks improved ties with Canada

BEIJING (Reuters): China called on Friday for steps to improve bilateral ties with Canada, saying there were no deep-seated conflicts of interest, following a spike in trade tensions with many of Beijing’s Western trade partners this year.

China is willing to work with Canada to put ties on a healthy and stable path and find solutions to address each other’s concerns through enhanced dialogue, Premier Li Qiang told Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney in a phone call on Friday, according to the state-run Xinhua news agency. “There is no fundamental conflict of interests between the two countries,” Li said.

Li’s talks with Carney followed a highly-anticipated phone call between US President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping, which Trump said led to “a very positive conclusion” and

offered hope the trade war between the world’s two largest economies might start to de-escalate. As the effects of trade frictions start to make their way into the already soft Chinese economy, Beijing has stepped up engagement with other countries to alleviate friction despite earlier retaliation.

In March, Beijing announced tariffs on over \$2.6 billion worth of Canadian agricultural and food products in retaliation for Ottawa’s levies on Chinese electric vehicles and steel and aluminium products introduced in October. Beijing has also launched an anti-dumping investigation into Canadian canola that is set to conclude in September.

Canola, also known as rapeseed, was one of Canada’s top exports to China, the world’s No. 1 agricultural importer, prior to Beijing’s investigation.

## UN warns of surge in acute malnutrition among Gaza’s children

NEW YORK: More than 2,700 children below the age of five in Gaza have been diagnosed with acute malnutrition, marking a steep increase in the number of children suffering from the serious medical condition since screening in February, the United Nations reports.

Of almost 47,000 under-fives screened for malnutrition in the second half of May, 5.8 percent (or 2,733 children) were found to be suffering from acute malnutrition, “almost triple the proportion of children diagnosed with malnutrition” three months earlier, the UN said.

The number of children with severe acute malnutrition requiring admission to hospital also increased by around double in May compared with earlier months, according to the report by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). According to data from the Nutrition Cluster cited by OCHA, more than 16,500 children below the

age of five have been detected and treated for severe acute malnutrition in Gaza since January, including 141 children with complications requiring hospitalisation.

Despite the increase in children suffering serious malnutrition and requiring hospitalisation, “there are currently only four stabilisation centres for the treatment of [severe acute malnutrition] with medical complications in the Gaza Strip,” the OCHA report states. “Stabilisation centres in North Gaza and Rafah have been forced to suspend operations, leaving children in these areas without access to lifesaving treatment,” it adds.

The UN’s latest warning on the health of young children in Gaza comes as the Palestinian territory’s entire population deals with starvation, and the World Health Organization (WHO) warned that the enclave’s “health system is collapsing”. Issuing an appeal for the “urgent protection” of two of Gaza’s last remaining hospitals, the

WHO said the “Nasser Medical Complex, the most important referral hospital left in Gaza, and Al-Amal Hospital are at risk of becoming non-functional”.

“The relentless and systematic decimation of hospitals in Gaza has been going on for too long. It must end immediately,” the WHO said in a statement. “WHO calls for urgent protection of Nasser Medical Complex and Al-Amal Hospital to ensure they remain accessible, functional and safe from attacks and hostilities,” it said.

“Patients seeking refuge and care to save their lives must not risk losing them trying to reach hospitals,” UN experts, medical officials in Gaza, as well as medical charities, have long accused Israeli forces of deliberately targeting health workers and medical facilities in Gaza in what has been described as a deliberate attempt to make conditions of life unliveable for the Palestinian population in the Strip. — Aljazeera